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Teatro di straniamento in Marinetti e Brecht

Scopo di questo mio saggio è analizzare e paragonare il teatro futurista italiano che vide la luce nel primo ventennio del '900 con il teatro brechtiano di pochi anni antecedente.[1] Ciò che accomuna Marinetti, capo spirituale dell'avanguardia storica italiana e Bertolt Brecht, è un attivo interesse per l'opera teatrale. Entrambi, riflettendo sulla condizione del teatro contemporaneo di tipo naturalistico mettono in evidenza come quest'ultimo, non avendo più nulla da proporre, abbia perso la forza di smuovere il pubblico: esso cade infatti in uno stato di assoluta passività, si identifica completamente con l'azione rappresentata e non è più in grado di assumere un giudizio critico ed oggettivo nei riguardi dell'opera d'arte. L'esperienza teatrale non lascia nessuna traccia sullo spettatore che esce da teatro senza aver appreso nulla e senza essere stato provocato intellettualmente. Il pubblico, sostiene Marinetti nel suo manifesto sul teatro sintetico, davanti a queste opere teatrali prolisse, rallentate da analisi meticolose,

> è nell'atteggiamento ributtante di un crocchio di sfaccendati che sorseggiano la loro angoscia e la loro pietà spiando la lentissima angoscia di un cavallo caduto sul selciato. L'applauso-singhiozzo che scoppia, finalmente, libera lo stomaco del pubblico da tutto il tempo indigesto che ha ingurgitato.[2]

Allo stesso modo Brecht, nei suoi scritti teatrali sottolinea il valore puramente "gastronomico" assunto dall'opera teatrale contemporanea. Il teatro è diventato un luogo di puro divertimento in cui il pubblico ipnotizzato da ciò che viene rappresentato sulla scena perde ogni capacità critica:

> Precipitatasi fuori da tranvie e ferrovie sotterranee, avida di trasformarsi in cera fra le mani dei maghi, gente adulta, temprata e resa inesorabile dalla lotta quotidiana per l'esistenza, prende d'assalto i botteghini dei teatri.[3]

Nel guardaroba, assieme al cappello, continua Brecht, il pubblico abbandona il suo contegno consapevole abituale, per abbandonarsi, "come tanti dormienti," agli eventi rappresentati sulla scena.

Per porre termine a questo stato di cose e rendere nuovamente vitale l'opera

teatrale bisogna, secondo Marinetti, rompere con la tradizione teatrale vigente per creare un'opera in cui lo spettatore mantenga un coinvolgimento attivo. Se si leggono i Manifesti del teatro futurista, appare chiara l'intenzione di Marinetti di rompere con la tradizione sia del teatro naturalista, che crede di poter riprodurre esattamente il momento rappresentato, sia del dramma psicologico che vuole analizzare lo sviluppo di uno stato d'animo interiore in tutta la sua complessità:

> Abbiamo un profondo schifo del teatro contemporaneo (versi, prosa e musica) perché ondeggia stupidamente fra la ricostruzione storica . . . e la riproduzione fotografica della nostra vita quotidiana; teatro minuzioso, lento, analitico e diluito, degno tutt'al più dell'età della lampada a petrolio.[4]

E un po' più avanti, contro il teatro psicologico, ed a favore del Teatro di Varietà futurista leggiamo:

> Mentre il Teatro attuale esalta la vita interna, la meditazione professionale, la biblioteca, il museo, le lotte monotone della coscienza, le analisi stupide dei sentimenti insomma (cose e parole immonde) la "psicologia," il Teatro di Varietà esalta l'azione, l'eroismo, . . . l'autorità dell'istinto e della intuizione. Alla psicologia, oppone ciò che io chiamo "fisicofollia."[5]

Inoltre, il voler tentare di rappresentare degli avvenimenti in modo logico e unitario, è del tutto insensato secondo Marinetti ed i futuristi poiché questo non accade mai nella realtà, la quale, al contrario, "ci vibra attorno assalendoci con raffiche di frammenti di fatti combinati tra loro, incastrati gli uni negli altri, confusi, aggrovigliati, coatizzati."[6] Il nuovo teatro deve allora, secondo Marinetti, abbandonare "le esigenze della tecnica" che imperano nel teatro "passatista": a causa di queste regole fisse, che determinano dettagliatamente tutti gli aspetti della rappresentazione teatrale, sostiene Marinetti, il teatro ha perso ogni possibilità creativa ed innovativa.

Similmente, Brecht, nei suoi scritti teatrali condanna la situazione teatrale contemporanea: egli isola due stili di recitazione, quello "elevato," "elaborato per le grandi opere poetiche" e quello "naturalistico," con cui venivano recitati i drammi di tipo realistico. Se questi due modi di fare teatro, hanno avuto una loro validità artistica, con l'andar del tempo essi sono tuttavia decaduti ed hanno perso la loro forza convincente:

> Della recitazione elevata non rimangono che l'affettazione e l'artificiosità, lo schematismo e la leziosaggine: tutti i vizi, insomma, in cui quello stile era caduto prima che il naturalismo gli desse il cambio. E del naturalismo della grande epoca non restano che l'incoerenza, la mancanza di forma e di fantasia,

> che gli erano proprie anche nella sua fase migliore. Bisogna dunque cercare nuove vie. . . .[7]

D'altra parte Brecht condanna, come già Marinetti, il teatro psicologico che in realtà non è in grado, né è interessato a rappresentare la complessità dell'essere umano, ma solo a schematizzare tipi generici con cui lo spettatore possa identificarsi senza problemi:

> . . . i personaggi principali debbono rimanere generici, affinché lo spettatore possa più facilmente identificarsi in essi; le loro caratteristiche debbono comunque giustificarsi entro lo stretto ambito in cui chiunque può affermare: "Sí, è proprio così." . . . La sola cosa importante per gli spettatori di questi teatri è di poter scambiare un mondo contraddittorio contro un mondo armonioso, quel mondo che si conosce assai poco contro un mondo che si può sognare.[8]

La frammentazione dell'opera teatrale già enunciata da Marinetti è riscontrabile anche nel teatro brechtiano. I vari elementi che costituiscono l'opera non devono dare adito ad una rappresentazione organica ed unitaria, ma, mantenendo la propria autonomia rispetto alla visione totale dell'opera, devono creare un'opera inorganica,[9] con la quale il pubblico non è più in grado di identificarsi:

> Finché opera d'insieme significa che l'insieme è una slavatura, finché cioè si tratta di "fondere le diverse arti, tutti i singoli elementi vengono necessariamente degradati in ugual misura. . . Nel processo di fusione viene incluso anche lo spettatore che fondendosi finisce col rappresentare, nell'insieme, una parte passiva.[10]

Brecht e Marinetti ritengono che per ridare vitalità all'opera teatrale sia necessario dunque rompere con la tradizione naturalistica che non è più in grado di produrre nulla di innovativo, per creare "una forma più scarna e diretta di espressione"[11] con la quale sia possibile risvegliare il senso critico del pubblico e stimolarne la reazione. Per smuovere il pubblico dal suo torpore, Marinetti in Italia e Brecht in Germania fanno uso di effetti di straniamento che cambiano drasticamente il modo di recepire l'opera da parte del pubblico, il quale non può più immedesimarsi, come nel caso del teatro borghese precedente, con il dramma rappresentato sulla scena, ma è obbligato, al contrario, a mantenere intatto il suo senso critico e ad assumere un ruolo attivo e consapevole nei riguardi di ciò che gli viene presentato.

Il concetto basilare di straniamento (*ostrananie*) ci è fornito dai formalisti russi: Sklovskij, nel suo articolo, "L'Arte come procedimento," definisce lo straniamento come un procedimento tecnico attraverso il quale è possibile restituire un significato agli oggetti facendoli apparire come nuovi. Egli infatti

sostiene che la percezione della realtà diventa, nella vita d'ogni giorno, automatica e meccanica: oggetti ed eventi non vengono più visti e compresi nel loro valore intrinseco, ma vengono riconosciuti solo per i loro tratti più superficiali. A causa di questa percezione limitata, "l'oggetto si inaridisce, dapprima solo come percezione, ma poi anche nella sua riproduzione."[12] Gli oggetti vengono descritti solo attraverso una loro qualità, e vengono recepiti dall'utente in modo distratto. In questo modo "la vita scompare trasformandosi in nulla," ogni cosa perde il suo significato ed è come se non fosse mai esistita. Per supplire a questa situazione, asserisce Sklovskij, esiste "ciò che si chiama arte," il cui scopo è "di trasmettere l'impressione dell'oggetto, come 'visione' e non come 'riconoscimento'";[13] il procedimento usato dall'arte per riuscire a rendere l'oggetto visibile nella sua totalitá è il procedimento dello "straniamento," attraverso il quale gli oggetti vengono presentati in modo nuovo, come se fossero visti per la prima volta. Il linguaggio artistico straniato allora,

> viene creato intenzionalmente per una percezione estratta dall'automatismo, e la sua 'visione' è lo scopo stesso dell'autore e viene creata artificiosamente in maniera che la percezione vi indugi, e raggiunga la sua forza e durata più alte possibili. . . . [14]

E' importante sottolineare tuttavia che per Sklovskij ed i formalisti russi "il processo percettivo, nell'arte è fine a se stesso":[15] gli effetti di straniamento impiegati in un'opera assumono dunque un valore prettamente formale in quanto sono l'unico mezzo attraverso il quale la percezione dell'oggetto artistico può avere luogo; il loro scopo è quello di rendere possibile l'opera d'arte, mentre vengono ignorate le loro possibili implicazioni extra-testuali.

Se Marinetti e Brecht fanno ampio uso di effetti di straniamento nelle loro opere teatrali, essi, al contrario dei formalisti russi, sottolineano l'importanza extra-letteraria di questi espedienti, i quali diventano nelle opere dei due autori un mezzo per smuovere la societá borghese dei primi decenni del secolo dalla sua passività intellettuale.[16] Gli effetti di straniamento sono in grado di risvegliare il pubblico in quanto, grazie alla loro caratteristica di novità, riescono a produrre nello spettatore una sensazione di shock e sorpresa, ed impèdiscono al pubblico di identificarsi con l'opera rappresentata.[17] Viene così a cadere il "quarto muro" che nel teatro tradizionale di tipo aristotelico separava nettamente il pubblico dal mondo fittizio rappresentato sulla scena, e gli spettatori, da semplici recipienti, diventano parte integrante dell'opera stessa. Bisogna tuttavia notare che, nonostante Brecht e i futuristi italiani reagiscano al teatro tradizionale usando tecniche simili e nonostante entrambi desiderino l'attivo coinvolgimento del pubblico, essi, a causa della loro diversa ideologia politico-sociale, producono opere teatrali completamente diverse tra di loro. Le tecniche di straniamento

usate dai futuristi risultano nel teatro sintetico, caratterizzato dalla sua brevità (una rappresentazione sintetica dura pochi minuti) ed il cui scopo è quello di "influenzare guerrescamente l'anima italiana."[18] Il drammaturgo tedesco fa uso invece di effetti di straniamento (*Verfremdungseffekten*) per dar vita ad un teatro epico, la cui funzione principale è quella sociale ed in cui il pubblico è coinvolto in un processo intellettualmente attivo. D'altra parte là dove Marinetti ed i futuristi aspirano, da parte degli spettatori ad una reazione immediata, impulsiva, irrazionale e violenta, Brecht sottolinea il valore didattico dell'opera teatrale, la quale "avendo principalmente di mira la storicizzazione dei fatti da rappresentare"[19] è in grado di dare allo spettatore una "visione complessa" della società, mettendo in evidenza i problemi sociali che la affliggono.

Come sottolina Re nel suo libro *Calvino and the Age of Neorealism*, lo straniamento dei formalisti russi può assumere livelli diversi: da una parte esso può rendere "strano" l'oggetto, rappresentandolo in modo inconvenzionale; oppure può straniare un dato codice estetico trasgredendo le norme che di solito lo definiscono e limitano; infine, un'opera può essere straniata nella sua totalitá quando vengono messi in evidenza elementi che svelano il suo carattere irreale ed illusorio, e diventa quindi impossibile per l'utente considerare l'opera come parte della realtà.[20]

I futuristi in Italia e Brecht in Germania impiegano nelle loro opere questi diversi modi di straniamento. Entrambi, ad esempio, rendono "strano" lo spazio scenico facendo uso di una scenografia nuova, non rappresentativa. Contro la scenografia tradizionale "intesa come descrizione della realtà apparente, come finzione verista del mondo visivo,"[21] i futuristi teorizzano una "architettura elettromeccanica incolore, potentemente vivificata dalle emanazioni cromatiche di una sorgente luminosa."[22] Lo spazio scenico diventa, grazie a questo nuovo uso della luce ed a diversi espedienti tecnici, come l'uso di diapositive, di film, e di parti mobili, una rappresentazione artistica astratta che non ha più niente a che vedere con la vecchia scena di tipo ibseniano, che dà una rappresentazione fedele di uno spazio reale. Anche l'attore viene spesso straniato attraverso l'uso di maschere e costumi che lo rendono irriconoscibile. Depero, nei suoi "Appunti sul teatro," parla di fari, megafoni e imbuti, i quali devono rimpiazzare occhi, bocche ed orecchie degli attori.[23] Il pubblico, non potendo riconoscere automaticamente lo spazio rappresentato o le persone che si aggirano sulla scena, percepirà lo spettacolo come una novità assoluta, come qualcosa visto per la prima volta.

Allo stesso modo Brecht fa un forte uso dell'apparato tecnico teatrale per rendere la rappresentazione "strana" affinché il pubblico non venga "ipnotizzato" e assorbito completamente dentro la scena rappresentata. La scenografia, come già nel caso dei futuristi italiani, non deve più rappresentare la realtà, ma deve

apparire estranea al pubblico, in modo che quest'ultimo non ci si adagi ed immedesimi. Così ad esempio, in *Gli Orazi*, il sole è rappresentato da una lampada portata da un tecnico da una parte all'altra del palcoscenico,[24] mentre nella commedia *Puntila*, Matti, il servo di Herr Puntila costruisce con delle sedie una montagna, che viene ad essere parte della scenografia.[25] Egli propone anche un abbondante uso di mezzi tecnici, come diapositive, film, ed illuminazioni in grado di rendere astratta la rappresentazione teatrale. Spesso, come tra gli attori del teatro futurista, gli attori brechtiani fanno uso di maschere il cui scopo è impedire che lo spettatore si immedesimi con il personaggio rappresentato.

L'elemento dello stupore e della sorpresa hanno un luogo di rilievo nel teatro futurista proprio per la loro capacità di straniare non solo l'oggetto rappresentato, ma anche il testo teatrale, il quale non si deve più conformare con le leggi che definiscono l'opera teatrale tradizionale. Se "l'elemento essenziale dell'opera d'arte è la sorpresa," sostiene Marinetti nel suo Manifesto "Il Teatro della Sorpresa," allora il valore fondamentale di essa risiede proprio nella sua "originalità sorprendente."[26] Marinetti esemplifica questo punto facendo notare come il famoso quadro "La primavera" del Botticelli abbia perso, attraverso plagi ed imitazioni, il suo valore di originalità, in grado di produrre nell'utente una sensazione di stupore. Per restituire all'arte, in questo caso all'opera teatrale, il proprio valore di novità assoluta, Marinetti propone di far uso di tutti quegli espedienti che, risultando nuovi al pubblico, impediranno ad esso di percepire il lavoro rappresentato in modo automatico e passivo:

> Il Teatro della Sorpresa contiene oltre a tutte le fisicofollie di un caffè concerto futurista con la partecipazione di ginnasti, atleti illusionisti . . . anche declamazioni dinamiche e sinottiche di parole in libertà compenetrate di danze, poemi paroliberi sceneggiati, discussioni musicali improvvisate tra pianoforti, tra pianoforte e canto, libere improvvisazioni dell'orchestra ecc.[27]

D'altra parte tutti gli elementi tipici dell'espressione teatrale come la luce, il suono, la parola e l'azione devono "coi loro prolungamenti misteriosi ed inesplicabili nella parte più inesplorata della nostra sensibilità" assumere "nuove significazioni."[28]

Un esempio di questo nuovo tipo di teatro è la sintesi *Parole* di Remo Chiti in cui una folla arrabbiata aspetta davanti ad un portone di un imponente palazzo governativo. Nonostante le parole enunciate dai vari punti della folla siano di per sé comprensibili, è impossibile, di primo acchito, seguire il senso logico del discorso in quanto ogni frase è incompleta:

> La folla (da vari punti)
> . . . e perché SONO anche un. . .

. . . già! e in CINQUANT'ANNI non. . .
. . . va là! CHE sei abbastanza. . .
. . . digli che ASPETTI qualche po'. . .
. . . qui c'è QUALCOSA che non va. . . .[29]

Se da una parte gli spettatori ricevono impressioni frammentarie che invece di chiarire la situazione la rendono più astratta,[30] d'altro canto le parole scritte in maiuscolo sulle quali va posta la maggior enfasi durante la recitazione, seguono un senso logico e si rivolgono direttamente al portiere che "vecchio, bianco, automatico" sbarra la porta del palazzo: "Sono cinquant'anni che aspetti qualcosa alla porta di un palazzo che non ti interessa affatto. . . ." Il testo quindi si sdoppia ed assume un nuovo significato che viene però straniato e reso quasi irriconoscibile dai mormorii della folla. Una rappresentazione teatrale di questo genere richiede naturalmente un pubblico attento, sveglio, con una forte capacità intuitiva.

Se in *Parole* di Chiti assistiamo allo straniamento del testo teatrale, in *Sintesi delle sintesi* di Janelli e Nicastro assistiamo ad azioni che, nella mancanza assoluta di attori, si susseguono con poco ordine logico. Sul palcoscenico buio appare una scia di luce bianca, poi si ode una revolverata seguita da grida e, dopo una breve pausa, si ode una "fresca risata di donna" contemporaneamente alla quale si spalanca una porta "violentando la platea di luce massiccia. Il sipario si stacca, e piomba."[31] Come si nota da questa e da altre Sintesi futuriste l'attore perde il suo ruolo predominante, mentre effetti scenici come la diffusione della luce, la caduta del sipario e rumori di vario genere diventano i veri protagonisti della rappresentazione.

Per quanto riguarda la visione dell'attore nel teatro futurista è necessario rifarsi al Manifesto di Prampolini "L'Atmosfera scenica futurista": l'attore, sostiene Prampolini, non solo è un "elemento inutile all'azione teatrale" ma è "l'elemento di interpretazione che presenta le maggiori incognite e le minori garanzie." Il suo ruolo viene quindi minimizzato e Prampolini giunge ad idealizzare una rappresentazione teatrale in cui gli attori scompaiono per lasciar luogo all'ambiente scenico che viene personificato.[32]

Quando l'attore è presente nello spazio scenico, egli è spesso deprivato della sua totale presenza fisica, come nella Sintesi *Le mani* di Marinetti e Corra.[33] In questa Sintesi appaiono solo le mani degli attori in diversi atteggiamenti. Esse si stringono, si giungono a preghiera, scrivono, graffiano, ecc. In questa rappresentazione è assente il fattore narrativo, e queste azioni frammentarie ed illogiche hanno potere straniante in quanto sono in grado di mettere in discussione e ridefinire l'opera teatrale tradizionale in quanto tale.

Non solo l'attore viene straniato attraverso l'uso frammentario ed astratto

del suo corpo, ma anche quando è presente sulla scena non può immedesimarsi con il personaggio da lui interpretato. L'attore deve infatti essere sempre in grado di uscire dalla sua parte per sorprendere il pubblico. Egli dovrà quindi far uso di

> caricature del dolore e della nostalgia, fortemente impresse nella sensibilità per mezzo di gesti esasperanti per la loro lentezza spasmodica esistente e stanca; parole gravi ridicolizzate da gesti comici, cammuffature bizzarre, parole storpiate, smorfie, buffonate.[34]

Anche per Brecht l'attore deve riuscire a mantenere una certa distanza tra se stesso ed il personaggio interpretato. Per raggiungere questo scopo l'attore deve, durante le prove, parlare del proprio personaggio in terza persona, cosí da non identificarsi completamente con lui:

> L'attore sulla scena non dá luogo alla totale metamorfosi nel personaggio da rappresentare. Non è Lear, Arpagone o Schwejk, ma **mostra** queste figure. Riferisce i loro detti quanto più esattamente possibile, riproduce il loro modo di comportarsi per quanto la sua conoscenza umana glielo consente; ma non tenta di convincersi (e perciò di convincere altri) di essersi completamente incarnato in essi. . . Rinunciato che abbia alla totale metamorfosi, l'attore recita il suo testo non come colui che improvvisa, ma come chi fa una citazione.[35]

Questo espediente è ben visibile nella commedia *La madre* in cui degli operai narrano di un loro recente conflitto con le autorità, e durante la narrazione gli attori rifanno la scena. Il pubblico quindi non vede il conflitto vero e proprio ma assiste ad una rappresentazione di questo ed è impossibilitato ad immedesimarsi con l'azione, perché gli attori stessi non stanno rappresentando un'azione, ma la stanno solo mostrando.[36]

Anche l'elemento della sorpresa, essenziale per il teatro futurista, è presente nell'opera brechtiana, ed il suo fine è quello di disorientare il pubblico; cosí, alla fine dell'*Opera dei tre soldi*, quando ormai pare chiaro che Mackie Messer verrá impiccato, Peachum si rivolge al pubblico con una soluzione diversa: grazie all'arrivo di un messo reale Mackie viene salvato. Un altro espediente usato da Brecht per ridefinire le norme che definiscono e limitano l'opera teatrale tradizionale è la ripetizione di certe scene. In questo modo egli riesce a rallentare la rappresentazione teatrale, ed allo stesso tempo a distruggere l'unitá narrativa tradizionale che procede sempre in linea retta. Il pubblico, una volta distrutta l'unitá narrativa, non sarà più in grado di perdersi nella trama del dramma o della commedia rappresentata, ma potrà soffermarsi e riflettere su ciò che l'opera

mostra.

Non solo l'unità narrativa dell'opera, ma anche l'unità temporale perde la propria validità nel teatro futurista e nel teatro brechtiano. Nel teatro futurista l'elemento temporale viene infatti reinventato. L'unità di tempo viene, ad esempio, abolita in *Passatismo* di Corra e Settimelli in cui, nel giro di pochi minuti, vengono riassunti cinquant'anni di vita di una coppia, mentre in *Simultaneità* di Marinetti assistiamo alla "contemporaneità di momenti differenti."[37] In questa sintesi due azioni completamente indipendenti tra di loro dividono lo stesso spazio scenico. Una giovane Cocotte si sta truccando e vestendo aiutata dalla sua cameriera, mentre una famiglia borghese trascorre una serata tranquilla. In altre occasioni, i futuristi danno l'idea di simultaneitá usando proiezioni che rappresentano una scena mentre gli attori ne stanno svolgendo un'altra.

Il tipo di teatro che meglio si addice alla visione futurista è, per Marinetti, il teatro di Varietà, perché in esso si può assistere ad una svariata gamma di rappresentazioni simultanee in cui l'unità temporale viene annullata. Lo spettacolo può infatti spaziare da esercizi acrobatici a "pantomime satiriche istruttive," da incontri di boxe alla rappresentazione di complicati avvenimenti politici, in cui ogni azione si svolge con una velocità ed una leggerezza sorprendente:

> Il Teatro di Varietà ci offre tutti i record raggiunti finora: massima velocità e massimo equilibrismo e acrobatismo dei giapponesi, massima frenesia muscolare dei negri, massimo sviluppo dell'intelligenza degli animali, . . . massima aspirazione melodica del Golfo di Napoli e delle steppe russe, massimo spirito parigino, massima forza comparata delle diverse razze . . . massima bellezza della donna.[38]

Se il teatro futurista distrugge l'unità temporale riducendo la rappresentazione di un'intera opera a pochi minuti, Brecht elimina questa unità dividendo le sue opere in episodi indipendenti tra di loro. Come già nel teatro di Varietà futurista, l'unità narrativa viene distrutta dall'impiego di canzoni e danze che interrompono la scena. Gli attori si trasformano in saltimbanchi e cantanti che commentano l'azione con gesti e parole che spesso non rappresentano lo stato d'animo del personaggio interpretato. L'idea marinettiana di attori che si esprimono attraverso "gesti esasperanti per la loro lentezza spasmodica" e che fanno uso di "parole gravi ridicolizzate da gesti comici" e viceversa, è visibile nella danza della guerra eseguita da Elif, il figlio di Madre Coraggio. Durante la danza egli non è mai completamente a suo agio, come è possibile notare dalle smorfie che fa, proprio nei momenti in cui dovrebbe essere più convincente.[39]

Un altro mezzo usato dai futuristi, ma soprattutto da Brecht, per far sì che

il pubblico non si identifichi con l'opera rappresentata, è la messa in mostra degli espedienti tecnici che rendono possibile l'opera stessa. Le luci sono spesso visibili nelle sintesi futuriste, mentre gli attori spesso si mostrano al pubblico non nel loro ruolo di personaggio, ma come attori consapevoli di stare recitando di fronte ad un pubblico. Allo stesso modo Brecht sottolinea l'importanza di luci visibili che illuminino il palcoscenico: come nessuno si aspetterebbe che le luci e i riflettori siano nascosti in un evento sportivo, cosí questi dovrebbero rimanere visibili anche durante una rappresentazione teatrale.[40] Anche il fatto che l'attore brechtiano, come abbiamo visto, non debba identificarsi con il personaggio rappresentato, ma si limiti a "citarlo," mettendo in evidenza il fatto di aver memorizzato la sua parte, rende lo spettatore consapevole che la recitazione non è un fatto automatico e "normale" ma è una tecnica che deve essere imparata.

Gli elementi di straniamento usati dai futuristi e da Brecht hanno come risultato la rottura del quarto muro: in entrambi i casi il pubblico infatti è consapevole di stare assistendo ad una recita, e deve mantenere un ruolo attivo. Tuttavia, a causa della loro diversa ideologia politico-sociale il tipo di provocazione esercitata sul proprio pubblico è molto diversa.

Lo scopo del teatro futurista, sostiene Marinetti, è di "influenzare guerrescamente l'anima italiana," quindi di incitare il proprio pubblico alla violenza, non solo contro "il passatismo" della borghesia, ma contro la potenza europea che riassume in sé, secondo Marinetti, tutti i caratteri retrogradi dell'epoca: l'Austria e la Germania. Il teatro di Marinetti è quindi un teatro interventista. Non a caso il "Manifesto del Teatro Sintetico" da cui è tratta la mia citazione è del '15, anno dell'entrata in guerra dell'Italia contro gli Imperi Centrali.

Ciò che i futuristi vogliono dal loro pubblico, dunque, non è una risposta intellettualmente attiva, intelligente, a cui il singolo spettatore può arrivare solo attraverso un processo lento di riflessione. È infatti stupido ed assurdo, sostiene Marinetti nel suo Manifesto sul *Teatro sintetico*,

> fare in modo che il pubblico debba sempre capire con la massima completezza il come e il perché di ogni azione scenica e soprattutto sapere all'ultimo atto come vanno a finire i protagonisti.[41]

Al contrario, i futuristi aspirano ad una risposta veloce, "simultanea," e, soprattutto, ad una risposta di gruppo, sempre calcolata da Marinetti, che, per raggiungerla propone espedienti di vario genere, tra cui

> mettere della colla forte su alcune poltrone, perché lo spettatore, uomo o donna, che rimane incollato, susciti l'ilarità generale. . . . Vendere lo stesso posto a dieci persone: quindi ingombro, battibecchi e alterichi. Offrire posti gratuiti

> a signori o signore notoriamente pazzoidi. . . . Cospargere le poltrone di polveri che provochino il prurito, lo sternuto ecc.[42]

Questi espedienti, più la provocazione dei testi teatrali stessi, che rompendo così drasticamente con la tradizione non possono essere recepiti facilmente, provocano naturalmente un senso di rabbia negli spettatori che reagiscono violentemente, assecondando così il desiderio dei futuristi: si pensi, oltre agli esempi già citati, all'*Atto negativo* di Corra e Settimelli, in cui un attore entra sul palcoscenico e rivolto al pubblico, in modo irritato dice categorico: "Io . . . non ho proprio niente da dirvi!",[43] ed esce.

Il pubblico diventa allora parte integrante dello spettacolo, in una battaglia dove insulti, uova e verdura marcia vengono scagliati da una parte all'altra del teatro. Come aveva teorizzato Marinetti, l'atmosfera del pubblico si fonde con quella del palcoscenico, e "l'azione si svolge ad un tempo sul palcoscenico, nei palchi e nella platea,"[44] per continuare poi, per la strada, sulle piazze e nei caffè.

Se per Marinetti il teatro deve essere un campo di battaglia, per Brecht esso assume un valore didattico. La vicenda narrata nel teatro epico brechtiano, che differisce dal teatro drammatico in quanto viene accentuata la narrazione dell'azione, ma non l'azione di per sé, deve stimolare l'attività del pubblico, strappargli delle decisioni e procurargli delle nuove nozioni.[45] Lo spettacolo teatrale non deve più essere puro intrattenimento, ma diventa per lo spettatore materia di riflessione. Mentre nel teatro futurista si richiedeva da parte del pubblico una reazione istantanea, nel teatro di Brecht viene creata

> la libertà epica di indugiare e riflettere. Poiché l'uomo protagonista dell'azione non è più che l'oggetto del teatro, si può andare al di là della sua persona e indagare sui motivi che lo spingono ad agire.[46]

Ecco che allora l'uso degli effetti di straniamento fatto da Brecht assume un valore molto diverso da quello marinettiano. Quando l'attore, nell'opera brechtiana, si rivolge direttamente al pubblico non lo fa, come nel caso dei futuristi, per ricevere una risposta immediata, ma per farlo riflettere su alcuni problemi di ordine morale. L'opera che meglio esemplifica questo punto è *L'Anima buona di Sezuan*, in cui lo spettatore osserva il doppio comportamento della prostituta Shen Te, che, per vivere una vita onesta è obbligata ad assumere di quando in quando la maschera di Shui Ta, uomo calcolatore e senza scrupoli. Alla fine della rappresentazione, alla domanda disperata di Shen Te, su come si possa vivere onestamente in una società così corrotta, gli dei da lei interpellati non hanno una risposta ed un attore, allora, rivolgendosi al pubblico lo esorta a trovare una soluzione: "Verhertes Publikum, los, such dir selbst den Schluss!"[47] Il pubblico si trova dunque obbligato a riflettere sui problemi di una società in

cui l'uomo onesto per sopravvivere deve ricorrere alla violenza ed alla frode.

Inoltre, se Marinetti, ad esempio, impiega proiezioni per sorprendere il proprio pubblico con un espediente tecnico moderno che permette di rompere l'unità temporale per rappresentare situazioni simultanee, Brecht ne fa uso per storicizzare l'opera e sottolineare il fatto che certe ingiustizie sociali che appaiono generali ed eterne, sono invece il prodotto di uno specifico momento storico e dipendono da una situazione politica che può essere cambiata e non deve essere accettata in tutta passività. D'altra parte, queste proiezioni hanno spesso il compito di riassumere o commentare ciò che accadrà nella scena seguente. In questo modo il pubblico potrà concentrarsi non più su "che cosa" succederà, in quanto questo gli è giá stato rivelato, ma "sul come" si svolgeranno le azioni. Così, ad esempio, in *Madre Coraggio*, il pubblico sa già all'inizio dell'undicesima scena che Kattrin, la figlia sordomuta di Madre Coraggio, morirà:

> Januar 1636. Die kaiserlichen Truppen bedrohen die evangelische Stadt Halle. . . . Mutter Courage verliert ihre Tochter und zieht allein weiter. Der Krieg ist noch lange nicht zu Ende.[48]

Questa scena perde dunque la sua suspense, ed il pubblico può allora riflettere sull'azione completamente altruistica della fanciulla che perde la propria vita per avvertire la città vicina dell'arrivo del nemico, e paragonarla alla bassezza morale della madre, la quale sfrutta la guerra per ricavarne profitti economici, mentre viene sottolineata, in tutta l'opera, l'inutilità e l'assurdità di una guerra che pare non voglia finire mai. D'altra parte, poiché viene sottolineata la storicità dell'evento, anche l'avidità di Mutter Courage non può più essere interpretata come una caratteristica generale umana, ma come il risultato di uno specifico momento storico.

Se i futuristi in Italia e Brecht in Germania, partono da un desiderio comune di "épater le bourgeois" e di rinnovare l'opera teatrale attraverso tecniche simili, essi, a causa delle loro diverse ideologie, si trovano in posizioni diametralmente opposte. Là dove Marinetti esalta la guerra come "unica igiene del mondo" e vuole che il suo teatro diventi una palestra per incitare ed allenare i giovani al conflitto mondiale, Brecht riforma il suo teatro per dargli una nuova dignità politica, e per far riflettere il pubblico sulle ingiustizie sociali esistenti in un mondo retto da una classe borghese corrotta.

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Note

[1]Non è mio scopo provare che Brecht sia stato influenzato direttamente da Marinetti, anche se è probabile che egli fosse a conoscenza dell'opera del futurista italiano. Marinetti ebbe infatti molto contatti con la Germania. La rivista tedesca "Der Sturm," diretta da Herwarth Walden, diffuse le idee dei giovani futuristi, e Marinetti, insieme ad altri futuristi, si recò a Berlino per presiedere esposizioni d'arte futurista. Non è dunque da escludersi che il giovane Brecht, attraverso il giornale di Walden, fosse a conoscenza del movimento futurista. Per maggiori informazioni sui rapporti tra i futuristi e l'avanguardia tedesca cfr. Demetz, *Italian Futurism and the German Literary Avant-Garde* (London: University of London, 1987).

[2]F. T. Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista* (Milano: Mondadori, 1990) 114-15.

[3]Bertolt Brecht, *Scritti teatrali* (Torino: Einaudi, 1962) 16.

[4]Marinetti 80-81.

[5]Marinetti 87.

[6]Marinetti 117.

[7]Bertolt Brecht, "Note sul teatro popolare," *Scritti* 86.

[8]Brecht, "Breviario di estetica teatrale," *Scritti* 106-07.

[9]Cfr. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984) 84-89. Egli sostiene tra l'altro, che uno degli elementi comuni tra avanguardia storica e Brecht è la predilizione per opere frammentarie ed inorganiche.

[10]Brecht, *Scritti* 14.

[11]Pullini, *Teatro italiano del Novecento* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1971) 70.

[12]Sklovskij, "L'Arte come procedimento," *Letteratura e Strutturalismo* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1978) 51.

[13]Sklovskij 51.

[14]Sklovskij 59.

[15]Sklovskij 52.

[16]Cfr. Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972) 54-59.

[17]Bürger 18.

[18]Marinetti 114.

[19]Brecht, *Scritti* 62.

[20]Lucia Re, *Calvino and the Age of Neorealism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990) 5.

[21]Prampolini, "L'Atmosfera scenica...," *Sipario* (Milano: Bompiani) dicembre 1967: 50.

[22]Prampolini, "Scenografia futurista," *Sipario* 56-57.

[23]Cit. in Kirby, *Futurist Performance* (New York: Dutton, 1971) 117.

[24]Brecht, *Stücke von Bertolt Brecht in einem Band* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp,1978) 419.

[25]Brecht, *Stücke* 682.

[26]Marinetti 167.

[27]Marinetti 168.

[28]Marinetti 82.

[29]Chiti, *Parole, Sipario* 92.

[30]Kirby 60.

[31]Janelli e Nicastro, *Sintesi delle sintesi*, *Teatro d'avanguardia*, a cura di Verrone (Roma: Officina, 1970) 95.

[32]Prampolini, "L'Atmosfera scenica. . ." 51.

[33]Marinetti e Corra, *Le mani, Sipario* 90.

[34]Marinetti 82.

[35]Brecht, *Scritti* 79-80.

[36]Cfr. Gray, *Brecht the Dramatist* (London: Cambridge UP, 1976) 70.

[37]Angelini, *Teatro e spettacolo nel primo Novecento* (Roma: Laterza, 1988) 36.

[38]Marinetti 87.

[39]Gray 69.

[40]Brecht, *Versuche* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959) 97.

[41]Marinetti 116.

[42]Marinetti 89.

[43]Corra e Settimelli, *Atto negativo, Sipario* 91.

[44]Marinetti 83-84.

[45]Brecht, *Scritti* 13.

[46]Szondi, *Teoria del teatro moderno* (Torino: Einaudi, 1962) 98.

[47]Brecht, *Stücke* 641. "Distinto pubblico, avanti, cercati la soluzione da te!"

[48]"Gennaio 1636. Le truppe imperiali minacciano la città protestante di Halle. . . Madre Coraggio perde sua figlia e procede da sola. La guerra continua ancora per molto tempo." (La traduzione è mia.)

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Autobiographical Seduction and Futurism

1. Introduction

This paper concerns itself with autobiographical accounts of seduction within Futurist literature. Although often dismissed as trivial, irrelevantly misogynist, incongruous, or banal, the issue of seduction lies at the heart of Futurism's program both as an artistic and later as a political movement—and as such deserves the further attention of scholars.

Seduction as a theme was present at the birth of Futurism: what its recognizance depends on, however, is the reader's awareness of the peculiarity of the Futurist use of the term. Seduction equals—unequivocally throughout the Futurist period—violence. Even when not explicitly violent, Futurist seductions occur, at the very least, dressed in the language of violence, of war, of rape. Thus, we read in the founding *Manifesto del Futurismo* (1909) that "La poesia deve essere concepita come un violento assalto contro le forze ignote, per ridurle a prostrarsi davanti all'uomo."[1] Although perhaps seduction itself is not the true means by which the deliberately vague "forze ignote" are to be reined in, that there exists a strong similarity between the purposes of poetry for the Futurists and the purpose of seduction as commonly defined—i.e. both seek the prostration of an object *at the feet of man* (following a very male discourse)—indicates a collusion of the significances of the seemingly disparate acts of "assault" and seduction. From this very early stage of Futurism, the equation: seduction = violence, is posited as central to the entire Futurist program. In seeking so tenaciously to expand itself through the propagation of its ideals, tenets and energy, the movement systematically availed itself of the powers of seduction. Only seduction, and prostration at the feet of Futurism, could ensure the growth and perpetuation of Futurism as a movement.

In terms of the self-consciously aggressive and militaristic heterosexual logic of Futurism, then, it should follow that the object of a program of seduction that emphasizes to such an extent the power of the male would be none other tan woman. It seems that she would fit most neatly in the role of that object which man wishes to have prostrated before him. How, then, can we explain within the founding *Manifesto*, merely several articles after the aforementioned desire for seduction, the expression of a "disprezzo della donna" and the desire to

"combattere contro . . . il femminismo," aimed at eradicating the very idea of femininity itself? This seemingly incongruent duplicity within the *Manifesto* allows us to begin to define what woman represented for the Futurists. The contrast between the expression of both a desire for seduction in the heterodoxical/heterosexual sense—of women by men, as is demonstrated in Futurist literature—and a declaration of disdain for women and femininity could not have escaped Marinetti's eye, nor was it intended to. Women were of two sorts for the Futurists, either *passatista*, or Futurist. The *passatista* woman, the *femme fatale* of *fin de siècle* Europe, was the enemy of Futurism, as she embodied, quite literally, all that the movement scorned. The *donna* that Futurism disdained used her "sentimental superstructures" to keep man entrapped, past-loving and passive.[2] According to his friends, Marinetti's disdain for women was not universal, but rather directed against that segment of the female gender characterized by its "senso simbolista e dannunziano."[3] In fact, Settimelli and Corra assert, in their introduction to *Come si seducono le donne*, the quasi-political tract on Futurist seduction, that

> Nessuno più di Marinetti **apprezza** le donne e noi amici possiamo testimoniarlo: egli combatte la donna non quale è veramente ma quale prodotto della passionalità egoistica del maschio orientale e della letteratura romantica. (*CSD* 23, emphasis mine)

Thus, the positing of a tenuous distinction between "apprezzo" and "disprezzo" —appreciation and disdain—marks the beginning of the reformation of the proper role for women within Futurist society.

The Futurist desire to displace the *femme fatale* of Romantic and decadent literature is, in effect, the desire to **replace** her in her role of agent of seduction. Furthermore, the very proximity of the *femme fatale* to the Futurist man could be potentially emasculating for him, as the woman as seductress leaves the man stripped of the opportunity to prove his masculinity (which can be accomplished only by having the object prostrate itself *through an act of violence* at the man's feet, and not vice-versa).[4] The sexual rapport between man and woman as characterized by the *passatista* model, in which the Futurists saw man first enveloped and then drained by the negative forces of an over-burdened nostalgic femininity, would do nothing other that hinder the male in his realization of the goal of Futurism—the extension of itself as a (primarily) masculine movement.

Thus, seduction for the Futurists occurs only of women by men, within a context of violence, and as the exterior manifestation of an ulterior motive. This "ulterior motive" shall remain at this point as unnamed, as were the "forze ignote" in the founding Manifesto, as the true purpose of seduction for the Futurists remained deliberately undefined throughout their literature. This

paper shall seek to pinpoint a definition of what Futurism would have intended seduction to mean, had the Futurists sought to furnish an unequivocal definition of it. Given the peculiar nature of autobiographical writing, auobiographical accounts of seduction are the best place to look for precisely such a definition.

2. *Autobiografia, Autobiografismo* and Seduction

The three works I intend to examine in detail include two by Marinetti himself, *Elettricità Sessuale* (1909), a play; and *Come si seducono le donne* (1918), variously described as self-help manual, novel, and *volume vissuto*; and a third written by the female Futurist writer Enif Robert—with Marinetti's collaboration—*Un ventre di donna* (1919). Although none of the three works purport to be strictly autobiographical— with the possible exception of *Come si seducono le donne*, which in its *proemio* (if not only there) defines itself as a "lived work," thus at least claiming to be true—all three are characterized by that literary trait known as *autobiografismo*. *Autobiografismo*, or in English, autobiographism, is in the definition of Fido "the tendency to write about oneself in any kind of work."[5] All three works contain, for one reason or another, which shall be explored later, an element of the autobiographical.

Granted the nature of autobiography, in which the author's intent (if one may speak of such a thing) seeks to portray none other than an image of the self, "a monument of the self as it is becoming, a metaphor of the self at the summary moment of composition," that, through the selectivity with which elements are either included within, or excluded from, the text, speaks of a meaning that no longer makes reference to actual facts or objects, but rather to their intended significance in relation to the life as a whole.[6] Whereas signification is eternally postponed, as Lyotard would put it, within works characterized by *autobiografismo*, it becomes clear that the referent is a purely metalinguistic one; it deals with metaphors and not facts of "self."[7]

Thus, close readings of autobiographical accounts of seduction, highly metaphoric as such, should reveal to the scrutinizing eye elements pertinent to their social and political relevance, scope, aim and so forth, as the selectivity with which the "truths" portrayed within the text cannot help but be indicative of where the text itself wishes to go—towards what metaphoric meaning it strives to reach. Furthermore, autobiographical accounts of seduction can have hidden within themselves an agenda, easily insinuated into the minds of those who read them; texts of seduction are seductive texts.

3. Seduction, Violence and Homosocial/sexual Desire

To recall briefly the original *Manifesto* of Futurism, even here, at Futurism's birth, violence, or at least aggression and/or speed, is present in all eleven

articles, indicative of its crucial importance for the movement as a whole. Why, however, did the Futurists feel such a pressing need to extend violence to seduction and to the sexual act itself? *Come si seducono le donne*, let us recall, is a book that "non poteva nascere che in un'epoca di guerra" (*CSD* 21). Thus we read its chronicles of seduction as though we were reading an account of the war that frames the text; the sexual and the bellicose meld together upon the written page. Indeed, the lexicon of seduction employed by Marinetti within the text coincides exactly with that of war: seduction is portrayed in three moments, 1. *strategia . . . tattica . . . lancio . . . attacco . . . agguato . . . bombardamento*; 2. *contrattacco . . . ostacolo . . . difendere . . . resistere*; 3. *vittoria . . . vincere . . . liberatore*, in which man is pitted against woman, with victory ensuing upon the "liberation" of the object of conquest (*CSD* 39-49). Indeed, sexual victory itself, portrayed by the language of war, concerns the prostration of woman before man, facilitating the final conquest—the male carnal possession of the female: as we read in *Abasso il tango e Parsifal!*, "Possedee una donna, non è strofinarsi contro di essa, ma penetrarla" (*TIF* 95). But the converse also exists, the sexualization of war/violence, as we see in the following example from *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna!*:

> Ecco la furibonda copula della battaglia, vulva gigantesca irritata dalla foia del coraggio, vulva informe che si squarcia per offrirsi meglio al terrifico spasimo della vittoria imminente! (*TIF* 26)

The Futurist's indefatigable lust for war—their Nietzschean will to power—permeates all of their art, regardless of medium. However, when no longer viewed in a simplistic way as a juvenile predilection, albeit incurable, the urge to mix violence with sex, and sex with violence appears indicative of another motive. According to Sedgwick, "to sexualize violence or an image of violence is simply to extend, unchanged, its reach and force."[8] Therefore, the driving motive behind the sexualization of violence for the Futurists is precisely the extension of its influence beyond the level of the personal (or the international, as there exists in Futurism the equating of the female body to the battlefield, and of the difference between genders to the difference between nations) to the level of their nationalistic discourse.[9] Seduction, as sexualized violent encounters, and violent sexual encounters, can be read within the Futurist context as being indicative of an entire symbolic and ideological system, in that the potential extent of its influence reaches far beyond its immediate implications. Dreams of penetration are prevalent in a movement that exalts imperialism and the violence of war, as it is not terribly difficult to compare the metaphoric significance of *jouissance* within the sexual act for the male with the thrill of victory upon the battlefield, nor to understand the equivalence between

vanquishing an enemy and vanquishing the enemy woman. As Valentine St. Point writes in her *Manifesto futurista della lussuria*, "È NORMALE CHE I VINCITORI, SELEZIONATI DALLA GUERRA, GIUNGANO FINO ALLO STUPRO, NEL PAESE CONQUISTATO, PER RICREARE DELLA VITA"; what is still unclear is why seduction is made into such a spectacle, and if it is indeed representative of a system, what constitutes such a system?[10]

At the most basic level, it becomes clear that the system is none other than the Italian patriarchal political ideology of this period. For all of Futurism's pretenses of radical change and rejection of this past, it remains largely anchored to this reactionary and traditional ideology. Within patriarchies, according to Sedgwick, heterosexuality is practically obligatory—as is, it appears, homophobia.[11] Indeed, a text such as *Come si seducono le donne* strives to prove the virility of its author obsessively, even to the point of being pathological, all the while vilifying homosexuality.[12] We read in Corra and Settimelli's preface to *Come si seducono le donne* a frank testimony to Marinetti's prowess as a male; even after a fifty hour journey to Palermo, Marinetti, rather than take his rest, bounds off "da una donna," whose anonymity indicates her function solely as proof of his heterosexuality (*CSD* 10). As befits the logic of all patriarchal systems, the textual woman serves only as the guarantor of male virility, as the vouchsafe of male heterosexual identity. The socio-political bonds that arise between men within the patriarchal system are therefore touched by the sexualization of violence/the violence of sxuality—**seduction** in Futurist terms—since the *topos* upon which the whole spectacle plays itself out, the female body, serves no other purpose than that of cementing the bonds between men. These homosocial bonds, the supposed polar opposite of homosexual bonds, between men are kept as such precisely because of the mediating role played by the woman, since they are "proof" of non-homosexuality and furthermore "offer" themselves as the proving grounds for the hypervirile Futurist male.[13]

Within the scheme of Futurist seduction the role played by women, posited as the supposed object of seduction, is often no more than that of a contractual term. True to Sedgwick's definition of homosocial desire, in which men actively seek to promote the interest of other men, seduction for the Futurists proves itself to be exactly that: a structure that permits the play of homosocial **desire**, while ensuring that the homosocial-homosexual continuum remains broken, thus eliminating the potential threat to the hypervirile Futurist male that desire regress to practice.[14] Therefore, the true partners for the male within this system of sexualized politics are other men; women are relegated to the position of controlling the heterosexual legitimacy of such arrangements.

The seductiveness of such autobiographical texts of seduction lies chiefly in their textual manifestation of a profound belief in the system which we have just

delineated. As Nazzaro writes,

> La scrittura diviene, così, un *progetto* concettuale, astratto e *persuasivo*, entro cui potersi calare e riconoscersi, onde poter postulare, sul piano delle trasparenze intellettive e con la complicità dell'interlocutore, delle modificazioni parametriche che, a loro volta, determinano la durata del piano programmato come *immediato intervento nella vita*.[15]

Thus the autobiographical text now serves three purposes: as a metaphor of the entire project, of the entire system; as a device to prove the virility of its author, thus completing a second seduction, that of its readers (presumably male, the true objects of the Futurist male's seductive endeavor); and as a means to ensure the participation of other males within the system—that *immediato intervento*.

Regardless of how effectively women play their role within this triangle there still exists the distinct danger that men will be overactive in their seeking the homosocial bond, and thus risk being effeminate in their desire for closeness to other men. The strictness with which the three points of this triangular relationship must be separated for the Futurists can be easily demonstrated, as the proximity of the male to the male within the context of homosociality gives rise to doubt about the virility of the male in question. Exaggeration of the male-male bond would allow the question of effeminacy to emerge. Ironically enough, an exaggeration of the male-female bond would accomplish the same, as it seems to bring on the languid decadence of the dannunzian model of the *femme fatale*-male relationship. Futurism sought to avoid movement along the homosocial-homosexual axis, as the taking of an overly extreme position on either end of it would mark a threat to the Futurist male. As Marinetti writes in *Contro il matrimonio*, in *Democrazia futurista*, "Sarà finalmente abolita la mescolanza di maschi e femmine che—nella prima età—produce una dannosa effeminazione dei maschi" (*TIF* 370). Although Marinetti claims to speak of onlythe tender *prima età* here, all stages of heterosexual male development and existence are implied, for the lingering male who remains with the female risks emasculation, regardless of age. Even during and after the sexual act, contact with the woman should be kept to the bare minimum: "Bisogna dunque velocizzare e sintetizzare anche l'amore!" as Marinetti claims (*CSD* 60).

The fear of not occupying one's correct station along the homosocial-homosexual continuum represented the threat to the virility of the Futurists. In fact, so tenuous was their idea of masculinity, so prone were they to incessant affirmations of their own unshakable virility, that it becomes clear that masculinity and virility had ceased to be perceived as a birthright, but rather have become a construct, a work in progress. As Gilmore writes of the construction of sexual

roles in Victorian England, "Boys . . . had to be made masculine; otherwise there was doubt."[16] Homophobia ("doubt"), hand in hand with disdain for the overly feminine woman, kept the Futurist male in check.

Regardless of the distances kept between the points of the triangle—especially between men—the broad insistence on the model of seduction that can be found throughout Futurist writing requires that the male as Futurist play what was traditionally a very feminine role. The Futurist ideal of seduction by the "hypervirile" male, when stripped of its (necessary) element of violence, does little more than invert the *fin de siècle* idea of the female seductress. Again, what prevents the exposure of the male as an essentially "female" character is the ever present role of the female object, the vouchsafe, whose presence as the ostensibly "true" object of seduction relieves any *Angst* or phobia that may accompany the active searching out of the true partner, other males.

Indeed, the female serves as little more than the screen behind which the oppressed homosexual desires of the hypervirile man can redress themselves as merely homosocial. As Sedgwick states, following Freud, effeminacy within heterosexual male development is a natural stage, as in the search for a separate heterosexual identity of their own, young boys find themselves in the position of "effeminized subordination" to their fathers.[17] The Futurist finds himself effeminized in the search for his own identity—and in his search to make others over in his own image. This version of the Girardian triangle functions precisely because of the male's **disdain** for the female, which keeps her at her proper distance (recall the "disprezzo per la donna" in the founding *Manifesto*); should she be approached any more closely, should velocity be removed from the sexual act, the element of homosocial attractiveness to other men might disappear as the male's hypervirile autonomy would disappear; should she be kept any more distant, the pretense of heterosexuality would no longer be credible. Regardless of the continuum that may exist between homosocial and homosexual desire, it must remain broken at least on the theoretical level, lest the Futurist fall prey to his own phobias.

The position of the male Girardian third within the Futurist triangle of desire points towards a conceivably broader role for the male as seducer—that of performer. In the accounts that we shall be reading the male third is cast in the only possible role exterior to the binary opposition seducer-seduced: that of audience. To maximize the legitimacy of the heterosexuality of the seductive spectacle the presence of the true object of seduction, the male, must be relegated to an external position, thus the invention of the role of spectator, of audience. Seductions can only be seductive if witnessed, thus Futurist seductions occur almost without exception within the arena of the theatrical, textual or rhetorical. As the male needs to be privy to the act itself, as voyeuristic as it may sound, in

order for the system to function properly, Futurist seduction occurs as drama. For Marinetti and the Futurists the theater of seduction and the theater of war, both public pectacles of virile prowess writ large, were one and the same, that *topos* within which the violent and the sexual can no longer be distinguished.

In conclusion to our definition of seduction for the Futurists it proves useful to affirm that the seduction of women was chronicled primarily within a variety of artistic media, most important amongst which were the printed word and the theatrical performance, both of which require an audience, a reader, a spectator, in order for them to have any sense. And, although both enjoyed female followings of their own, ultimately they targeted the male audience, in hopes of seducing them into the Futurist fold.

4. Seduction, Violence and Homophobia: Proof of System

Homophobia, too, loosely defined, was a vital component of the violence of Futurist seduction and of the Futurist patriarchal system, as it maintained the heterosexual legitimacy of the Girardian triangle, granted its implied presence in (or motivation behind) the endless bragging and parading of the **female** object of desire. Therefore, the seduction of women may be equated with homophobic violence as both actively seek within the framework of Futurist ideology to seduce men through the aggressive foregrounding of their presumably virile qualities. That violence and seduction/penetration of women were unequivocally tied together was clear to all, least not to the Futurists themselves, as can be seen in the following example from *Come si seducono le donne*, in which, one night at a *serata futurista*, according to Corra and Settimelli in the preface to the work,

> Marinetti esclama: "Noi siamo per la violenza" ed uno spettatore con tutta ingenuità domanda di fondo: "Scusi, che cosa ne pensa della violenza carnale?"
>
> Battuta di spirito? Semplicità? Non è possibile saperlo ma noi risentiamo ancora l'effetto comicissimo di quella voce cauta e discreta. (*CSD* 18-19)

The question itself is ingenious because it is born of simplicity: the spectator fails to grasp that for the Futurists violence **is** both physical and carnal; violence is both war and rape, international and personal. Homophobia, or even the mere use (seduction/penetration) of women objectively vis-à-vis the male third within the Girardian triangle, delineates a space, a mechanism of domination (but not necessarily its agency, thrust or motivation) of the bonds that structure all social form, and not just its declared, immediate objectives.[18]

Homophobia, as characterized by this limited definition on the Futurist political, theatrical and textual stage, has a large amount of leverage as it coerces all attendant males (the audience) into questioning—and affirming (i.e. through further acts of violence, war and seduction)—their own heterosexual, male

identity. The male Futurist audience can never be passive, since it is explicitly asked to play out in its own life, to recall Nazzaro, the seductively ideological spectacle to which it is privy. The recruitment of active male participants within the Futurist movement, seems to be at least partially the system at which seduction hints. A further elaboration of this will be conducted upon reading of the texts in question.

Therefore, prior to opening the texts themselves, I posit that in Futurist autobiographical accounts of seduction it would be practically impossible not to gain some idea of what the movement as a whole intended to be its "thrust and motivation," as autoiography as a genre has within its scope the relation of a metaphorical meaning of, in this case, the seductive self.

5. *Elettricità sessuale*: Violent Seduction and the Audience Revealed

Elettricità sessuale, a short play in three acts, was first published in its original French under the title of *Poupèes èlectriques* in 1909, the year of the founding of the Futurist movement. Although one cannot claim that it is strictly autobiographical in nature, *Elettricità sessuale* presents a variety of elements to its reader—to its audience—that reflect the "insistente autobiografismo" of its author, Marinetti himself.[19] The story is of Riccardo Marinetti, a "ingegnere, costruttore di fantocci electtrici," and his wife, Maria, and the former's particular perversion of having present a number of his *fantocci* whenever he chooses to **seduce** his own wife.[20] The choice of the two very *unheimlich* mechanized dolls that appear within the play, professor *Matrimonio* and madame *Famiglia*, is striking. Both represent the normative social institutions which Marinetti the Futurist vehemently opposed. Ironically, however, Marinetti himself was married in 1909, the year that *Elettricità sessuale* was first published in Italian.[21]

As one of the maids in the Marinetti household remarks, "Il padrone e la padrona si concedono ogni sera il lusso e l'illusione di baciucchiarsi dietro le spalle di qualcuno!", reflecting the sense of a heightening of the pleasure of the sexual encounter through the presence of a third party (*ES* 13). Whether or not this third party is the third party of the Girardian scheme remains to be discussed. It is certain that Marinetti the character's—and by autobiographical extension, Marinetti the man's— performance on the sexual stage requires the presence of an audience, albeit one that is hoodwinked by what goes on behind its back. Marinetti the character derives pleasure from the act of seduction precisely because of the secretive element of it. He often has Maria play along with his fantasy of seduction, telling her,

> Maria. . . Senti. . . Io non sono tuo marito. . . Tuo marito è lì, [pointing to professor Matrimonio] davanti a noi. . . Dorme. . . Sono io, io. . . Lo sai, chi

sono. . . ." (*ES* 28)

Marinetti's seduction of his own wife works because of the scripted complicity of a mechanical version of the necessary third, onto whom he projects his dreams of a system of seduction. The presence of mechanical versions of the polar opposites of Futurist "libero amore," family and marriage, exacerbates the theatrical virility of the seducer himself, as the seductive act becomes one of great daring. However, the fact that the two *fantocci* doze throughout the whole scene of seduction in the second act—with occasional coughing spells to heighten the fear of discovery—seems to fly in the face of what we have proposed as the model of Futurist seductions: the third is present, but unaware. One must recall that the act of seduction portrayed within the text was intended to be performed on stage, thus the theater of seduction coincides perfectly with the stage of drama. The male audience—the true object of seduction—does not nap away unconsciously on stage, rather it sits rapt with attention in the theater, privy to a scene of Futurist seduction. The barrier created by the fourth wall of the play, which separates the audience from the scene on stage—andthus the male elements of the Girardian triangle—ensures that the homosocial- homosexual continuum remains broken. The theatrical or artistic performance of an autobiographical account of seduction proves to be the safest mode of relation, as it permits the unabashedly voyeuristic gaze of the male audience, without however allowing the proximity of the two elements which might prove to be effeminizing/emasculating for the seducer.

Confirmation that the seduction of his own wife within *Elettricità sessuale* was designed as little more than an overture to the male members of his audience can be found throughout the short play. Indeed, the pressing need that Marinetti the character felt to seduce his own wife, so as to lend meaning to their sexual encounter, indicates that the staging of the whole scene of seduction was intended primarily for the benefit of those onlookers who should remain in awe of such brash and unconventional sexual *mores*. Furthermore, the very present element of violence within Marinetti's seduction, again, of **his very own wife**, alerts us to the fact that the whole staging aims to benefit that third party removed from the events being played out on stage. The rather ludicrous, if not disturbing, need for Marinetti's introduction of violence into what should be a consensual relationship, points to his unease that somehow his seduction may not be "virile" enough. Marinetti remarks to Maria at one point,

> Ma penso alla tua piccola anima senza difesa che si dà soltanto se vien presa colla violenza. . . . E il tuo corpo, lo stesso!. . . . Strano! Mi pare che sia alla mercè di chiunque voglia impadronirsene brutalmente! . . . Eh, sì! . . . Tu sei e sarai sempre a disposizione dei ladri, come il pianterreno di una villa isolata nella campagna. . . In una sera di temporale, come questa, la

tua volontà non esiste più. . . . (*ES* 26-27)

Only in the presence of violence, and a male audience to vouch for its legitimacy, can Marinetti's seduction redeem itself as worthy of Futurism. Nor does his schematically ideal seduction stop here. *Elettricità sessuale* marks the entrance of the element of the mechanical in Futurist literature, which comes to fruition only later, with works such as *L'alcova d'acciaio* and *Mafarka*. Riccardo Marinetti states that his idea is to "frammischiare i miei fantocci alla nostra vita e al nostro amore," thereby gradually assuming the roles of the real people that surround him—"essi riassumono e sostituiscono, per me, tutta l'umanità, e ormai non desidero più vedere i miei simili, quando sono con te... Con loro" (*ES* 31, 34). The only real presences that Marinetti requires other than his own are that of the woman, now strictly an object, a prop, and the male audience to lend significance and legitimacy to the performance. As Marinetti yells at the end, casting the two dolls into the sea, "Famiglia e Matrimonio, *vlan*, dalla finestra," leaving upon the stage—and within the theater—the three basic elements of Futurist seduction: seducer, woman, and **audience** (*ES* 37).

6. *Come si seducono le donne* and Seductively True Stories of Seduction

Come si seducono le donne, first published in 1917, removes the audience of Girardian thirds one degree further away from Marinetti*seduttore*. The self-styled "self-help manual" recounts the exploits of the hypervirile main proponent of Futurism as told to a third, namely Bruno Corra, who transcribed the dictated text.[22] The fact that the text purportedly represents a *libro vissuto*, the veracity of which is vouched for by Corra and Settimelli in their laudatory preface, lends itself quite easily to its consumption as autobiographical spectacle by an audience desirous of enfranchisement in the Futurist seductive fold. The foregrounding within the text of such boastful claims of seduction leaves little choice for those male readers who take seriously the Futurist discourse but to take up Marinetti on his challenge to prove their own virility. *Come si seducono le donne* is in many ways a co-opting text. Regardless of how it might be read by a man, the text succinctly manages to call into question the male reader's heterosexual psyche. This forces the male reader, who compares his behavior to that of the hyperbolically hypervirile Futurist male, to evaluate his own virility and, as Marinetti himself must have hoped, to contemplate future action concordant with the Futurist agenda.

Of the two instances of seduction within the text that I wish to examine in detail, the first concerns itself with all of the classically Futurist elements we have thus far uncovered. One of Marinetti's first conquests within the text is that of the young American woman, Miss Maery [sic], who Marinetti describes as being

"priva di ogni passatismo nostalgico" (*CSD* 54). Thus she is identifiable as a woman worthy of being Futurist prey, as she does not manifest any of the remnants of the decadent *dannunzianismo* that so imperils the Futurist seducer. Indeed, "passatismo nostalgico" can also be read more simply as being any inhibitive scruples which might complicate the velocity and high degree of synthesis of the beloved Futurist sexual encounter. However, potentially disastrous—and gravely unfortunate— an event arises, or fails to: Marinetti finds himself impotent and incapable of either rapidly or synthetically concluding the sexual act. Exasperated and "senza amore," Marinetti, incapable of conquest, finds himself slowly being entrapped by the overly effeminate. In vain, to cure his impotence brought on by an overdose of decadent indulgence, he searches the horizon for the sight of the one thing which would restore him as a Futurist male—a machine gun (*CSD* 55).

Symbolic of the violence and "quel bisogno di pericolo, di agguato, di lotta" that lends legitimacy to Futurist sexual relations, the presence of a machine gun would assuage the fears of the Futurist male in crisis. Like Riccardo Marinetti's *fantocci elettrici*, a machine gun would heighten desire ("intensificare il sapore della tua bocca") and, more importantly, guarantee the virility of the act within the strict guidelines of the movement (*CSD* 38, 55). Turning the event to his own advantage, Marinetti now blames the woman for his own inability to perform, chastising Miss Maery who, in perhaps a trope on American neutrality, lies "come un Luigi dimenticato sul tappetto verde di una tavola da gioco senza giocatori e senza croupiers," failing completely to understand what Marinetti seeks to accomplish. Marinetti in the end leaves her, the inert playing card, quite abruptly, exclaiming more to himself **and to his reading audience**, than to she who seems not to understand ("Je ne comprends pas," she answers to his Futurist ranting in Italian) "Tu devi adornare la tua bellezza di guerra . . . sei incompleta" (*CSD* 55-56).

Interestingly enough, Corra takes leave of Marinetti at this point, perhaps disgusted with his exaggerations. Regardless of this, Marinetti perseveres in his seductive quest—"Lo saluto e me ne vado a domandar consiglio alla carne rosea di una amica olandese, sensuale, pronta. . . ."—so virile is the text at this point that it proceeds autonomously (*CSD* 56-57). Even Corra, on the verge of relating a uccessful seduction of Marinetti's, is demoted to the rank of mere spectator, of audience, as the writing proves itself capable of continuing on, even without the very necessary presence of someone to transcribe it. Marinetti prides himself on his next encounter precisely because it functions so well within the Futurist scheme of seduction. Immediately after a minimalist account of the act itself ("dopo averla presa, baciata, rovesciata, senza svestirsi") follows a parenthetical description of its accompanying noise, to which are dedicated an

equal number of words ("al tinnire dei miei speroni di bombardiere"), thus proving the element of war within seduction to be of equal textual importance (*CSD* 57). The carnal assault on the Dutch woman proves to be far more complete an encounter than the previous for more than physical reasons. The jingle of Marinetti's spurs alludes to the violence of the coupling with a married woman within the pages of a supposedly autobiographical text. This implies, for all intents and purposes, three things: the betrayal of the woman's husband, the hoodwinked Mr. Marriage; the prostration of a woman at a Futurist's feet; and the presence of violence so sacrosanct for the deed. It is, in brief, a perfect example of a Futurist seduction. The success of this case of seduction is far better chronicled within the pages of *Come si seducono le donne* than the previous failure, as an analysis of the seven word sexual act follows its relation, proving how well it fits into the pre-established Futurist script. "La donna senza la guerra è una rivoltella scarica," Marinetti remarks, claiming in this manner that his impotence in the previous encounter with the American woman came about because the element of war was absent from the scene (*CSD* 59). Without war there can be no seduction for Futurism because there would be no **point** to it, as without war—without violence born of homophobia—a seduction would never be credible for the audience, nor would they as the Girardian third have reason to admire or emulate it.

The Dutch woman represents in many ways the ideal Futurist lover: she admires male velocity and violence—"Amami pure guerrescamente e sinteticamente. Mi piace."—and accepts readily the role assigned to her by her hypervirile partner (*CSD* 60). She does catch on to this; "Tu consideri le donne come delle stazioni ferroviarie," she remarks, sparking however an even more insightful comment by Marinetti, "Talvolta non sono che dei tunnels!" (*CSD* 60). The idea of women as tunnels, as devices, as the *topos* of passage, fits equally well into the Futurist scheme of seduction as did that of war. A few lines below on the same page, Marinetti speaks of the expansion of Futurism as a movement, in which they, the Futurists, "Si sventrarono le montagne coi trafori spiralici." Again, the tunnel, **disemboweled nature**, here in the proper Italian "trafori," as woman, serves as a means of passage through which the Futurist man can proceed in his conquest.

7. *Un ventre di donna* and a Final Literary Seduction

Enif Robert, who published *Un ventre di donna* with the assistance of Marinetti in 1919, responds in many ways to the seductive spectacles of Futurist literature. As she wrote in the theoretically polemic epilogue to *Come si seducono le donne*, she disagrees with Marinetti's *passè* definition of seduction, as it excludes the possibility that a woman may give herself in of her own free

will and volition to the wants of man. Futurist seduction, as far as Robert is concerned in her *Lettera aperta a F. T. Marinetti*, is no more than a figment of the male psyche, used as an "illusione di dominio."[23]

Robert's choice of autobiography as genre reflects in many ways her sincere desire to join the Futurist literary ranks, as it can best trace metaphorically—as indeed *Un ventre di donna* does—one's growth and development to that point of the "summary moment of composition." Her apparent susceptibility to being seduced, on which she prides herelf, causes her to lose sight of the inherent perils of such a seduction within the greater scope of its full range of meanings for Futurism. Although naïve is far too strong a word to be used with Robert, her ardent desire to be part of the Futurist triangle of seduction—to be what Futurism wants her as a woman to be—indicates that she gave little thought to the full implications of her actions.

Un ventre di donna portrays to a large extent the irony of what role a Futurist woman's autobiography, albeit allegorical, can play. I argue that female accounts of Futurist seduction prove little more than the effectiveness of the entrapping seductive powers of Futurist literature, and not, as Robert believes, the great liberating aspects of Futurism. Whilst reading of Robert's self-proclaimed "CORAGGIO + VERITÀ" it is important to remember that the text itself was subject to prostration at the metaphorical feet of Marinetti-as-editor's pen; his "Approvo incondizionatamente," followed by his signature, at the tail-end of the introduction attests to this.[24]

Enif Robert's textual illness appears to center around her very own gender, as reflected in her despondent comment at the beginning of the work, "Che schifo, essere un utero sofferente, mentre tutti gli uomini si battono!" (*UVD* 25). Her illness appears to be compounded by what can only be described as gender constipation: Robert is held back in life and in health by her inability to evacuate from within her the pain and suffering she endures, most of which seems centered around her uterus—her femininity.

Despite the numerous operations she undergoes, as her female reproductive organs are slowly removed bit by bit, Robert's condition seems to do little else but worsen. It is one of Robert's doctors who eventually makes the correct diagnosis of her condition: "Ecco: per quanto sia difficile definirla, dirò che lei mi sembra un cervello troppo virile in un corpo troppo femminile" (*UVD* 97). Thus her sickness, that which hinders her most in life, is precisely the female vessel in which her virile—her Futurist—brain has been deposited. Her solution and definitive cure is two-fold: surgical and textual. To pass time during her long stays in the hospital, Robert begins to read Futurist books, brought by her friend Lucia. She also begins to correspond with Marinetti himself, who writes her from the front, that theater of war upon which are traced the scarred trenches,

inviting contrast with the theater of sexuality that is Robert, upon whose abdomen are traced trenches of scars. In addition, Robert keeps in frequent contact with Eleonora Duse, the *donna fatale* archenemy of Futurist sexuality, all the while fending off viral attacks from the nuns of the convent, all eager to convert her, the "atea convinta," to Catholicism. Thus within Robert—and **upon** Robert the woman, *topos* of struggle and conquest—several contingents of contending forces do battle: Futurism, femininity, Catholicism, and *dannunzianismo*.

The first sign of victory comes in the form of delirium, the description of which provides for one of the most compelling portraits of Futurist seductions, if not the most scandalous. As she thinks of *Zang-tumb-tumb* lying next to *I miracoli della Madonna di Lourdes*, both on her bedside table, Robert begins to fantasize about the struggle between the two works:

> Infine, nella mia fantasticheria, la dolce Madonna aveva ceduto completamete il campo al lirismo incendiario e guerresco di Marinetti, alle sua mordenti ironie. (*UVD* 47)

The seduction of the Madonna, and by extension of Robert herself, occurs primarily by means of the printed Futurist text, vindicating the seductive intentionality of Marinetti in writing such works. To continue along the path to recovery, Marinetti suggests that she take the "cura del desiderio," in which incessant desire alone can cure her illness. Robert takes this Futurist cure to heart, developing a desire of her own—"il più assurdo, il più difficile, il più lontano, quello di diventare . . . una scrittrice futurista!" (*UVD* 134). This dream of authority, this dream of text, comes to symbolize the whole of *Un ventre di donna*, as the book can be read as nothing more than a "monument of the self as it is becoming."[25] To reach this goal, as does Giorgina Rossi in *Una donna con tre anime*, Robert must undergo further operations, as her being a female still impedes her passage to authorship. Like the mountains that block the Futurist locomotive of progress, Robert, too, must be disemboweled—"sventrata"—leaving only her vagina, that crude tunnel through which Futurist man can travel, proving his virility as he proceeds towards future conquests.

Proof that Robert is finally cured, finally hollowed of her femininity, can be found in a letter she writes to Marinetti, starkly contrasting her initial auto-diagnosis quoted earlier: "Vorrei alzarmi, andare in guerra, in trincea, sparare, uccidermi, finirla. Sono *stuuuufa*!" (*CSD* 192).

Robert is fully seduced by Marinetti by the end, as attested by her no longer being a woman, but merely a "tunnel," according to the definition we read in *Come si seducono le donne*. In order to save her femininity, Enif Robert has to destroy it, lest she fail to fulfill her role as a Futurist woman. Her conscious

acquiescence to the seductive powers of Futurist literature implies her loss of identity as a woman: Enif Robert, female, writes herself out of her own femininity.

To conclude, the example of Enif Robert demonstrates the functioning of the seductive aspect of Futurist texts, as she appears anxious to join the movement based on its purely literary appeal. Perhaps unknown to Robert was the way in which the co-optive powers of Futurism worked, in that her own text stands as a monument not to any feminine aspect of Futurism, but rather to its triumph as a very virile and masculine movement. The leverage exerted by the Futurist seductive system enables the enfranchisement of even women, who seemingly have little to gain by courting the violence of the Futurist *seduttore*. The Futurist cause upon the stage of the theatre of war and sex, where such spectacles were apt to take place, even metaphoric as such, is thereby furthered. The theatrical nature of autobiographical accounts of Futurist seductions—even within works written by women—allowed Futurism to successfully define seduction as what it is even etymologically—*se+ducere*—the leading along with one's self. The ominous presence of the stem *duc-* should not be read as being coincidental, as *il Duce* himself availed himself of the Futurist idea of seduction in coming to power four years after the publication of *Come si seducono le donne*, providing perhaps the first correct critical reading of what the ulterior motives of Futurism really were: seduction and subordination within a structural rigidity.

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Notes

[1]*Teoria e invenzione futurista* 10. All further references to this work shall be noted parenthetically within the text as *TIF*.

[2]Re 254.

[3]*Come si seducono le donne* 23. All further references to this work shall be noted parenthetically within the text as *CSD*.

[4]Spackman 92-93.

[5]Fido 168.

[6]Olney 35.

[7]Lyotard 2.

[8]Sedgwick 6.

[9]Spackman 96.

[10]Salaris 37.

[11]Sedgwick 3.

[12]Spackman 86.

[13]Spackman 83.

[14]Sedgwick 3, 5.

[15]Nazzaro 100, emphasis mine.

[16]Gilmore 18.

[17]Sedgwick 23.

[18]Sedgwick 87.

[19]Nazzaro 100.

[20]*Elettricità sessuale* 5. All further references to this work shall be noted parenthetically within the text as *ES*.

[21]According to *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, *La donna è mobile* was presented on stage in Turin that very year, a reduction of *Poupèes èlectriques*.

[22]Spackman 97.

[23]*Lettera aperta a F. T. Marinetti* iii.

[24]*Un ventre di donna* xv. All further references to this work shall be noted parenthetically within the text as *UVD*.

[25]Olney 35.

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FigarO
+
SIGARO
SFIGARO

> L'amore—ossessione romantica e voluttà—non è altro che un invenzione dei poeti, i quali la regalarono all'umanità. . . . È saranno i poeti che all'umanità lo ritoglieranno. . . . Filippo Tomaso Marinetti

> L'uomo le inventa per l'illusione di dominio, di superiorità, per l'istinto aggressivo di conquistare sempre qualcuno o qualcosa: la donna lascia credere che ciò sia vero perché quasi sempre le fa comodo adoperare la propria debolezza apparente come un'arma fra le sue più valide. Enif Robert

Despite the obvious misogyny ("il disprezzo della donna") ingrained in the agenda of the 1909 *Manifesto del futurismo*, Enif Robert, as other (albeit few) women writers, not only engaged in a discourse with Futurism, but sought out a space amongst "i poeti che all'umanità lo ritoglieranno."[1] After some debate on the issue, Marinetti qualified "il disprezzo della donna" as a "contempt" for woman as the icon of decadence, which he attributed to the *fin-de-siècle* writers (specifically Gabriele D'Annunzio). Marinetti and Robert converge in their "contempt" for the unhygienic/decadent positioning of woman as the "femme fatale," the bourgeois wife and the nurturing mother (mammismo). As a result, both Robert and Marinetti glorify virility and aggressiveness. However, the two Futurists' contempt of the un-hygienic diverges in respect to Marinetti's fear of the engulfment of not only "uomo-torpediniera," but also the "follarisacca" in the "donna-golfo." Robert reacts not to a fear of the "vagina dentata," but to the socially conditioned "debolezza" and imprisonment of women. Thus, for Robert denaturalizes the pre-existing phallocratic or dominant mode of representation, exposing "l'illusione di dominio."[2]

Although Marinetti's "Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo" considers this "inferiorità" of "women" to be the effect of "questa [schiavitù che] avessero subito, attraverso una lunga serie di generazioni," he does not advocate the

liberation of women, but the reduction of women to the "funzione conservatrice della specie." Marinetti substitutes the threatening fatal, amorous woman with the more animalistic natural woman who is once again objectified (domesticated) as the vessel of man's reproductive capacity—a mere bodily extension of the male productive powers. Embracing the Futurists' rejection of the socially debased woman, yet opposing the reduction of woman to a reproductive role, Robert's self-situating as a "donna futurista" corresponds directly to a desire for gender repositioning: a radical transformation which must unmask bourgeois sexual politics as "l'illusione di dominio." Robert calls for a demystification of gender roles, and for allowing women to prove their intellectual virility to equal that of man. Robert's experimental novel *Un ventre di donna* expresses her repudiation of the subordinate emplotment of women as the vessel of man's seed by thematizing the eradication of female fecundity (the unmaking of the womb), disclosing a stronger desire for equality—an attempt to prove that women can be "anche vive, coraggiose, forti, VIRILI, INTELLIGENTI, a fianco del loro maschio."[3] However, inclusion in the futurist movement entails a collapse of sexual difference and a movement toward what Luce Irigaray calls "sameness."

Robert does not assume the role historically assigned to the feminine, nor does she accept the one assigned by Marinetti and company. However, her direct feminine challenge to these historical conditions paradoxically leads to the demand to speak as a (masculine) "subject." Robert does not provide a disruption of masculine (phallocratic) discourse, but rather a validation of that very discourse by attempting to become part of it. Hence Robert rejects the mimicry of female roles only for another mimetic role—this time under the guise of a man. As Susan Suleiman explains, it is not enough to simply assume a subject position and "take over a stock of images established by the male imaginary . . in order to innovate she has to invent her own position as subject and elaborate her own set of images."[4] Although Robert does "write the body"—using her own body as a textual reference—this writing of the body becomes a destructive process aimed at the purging of what she considers the un-hygienic (womb) which will then allow her to be cured and become equal to man—emasculated via the process of writing. More importantly, she eliminates the barring symbol of nature and fecundity which poses a threat to the paranoid futurist movement.

Enif Robert's *Un ventre di donna*, her only published fictional work (1919), as Claudia Slaris explains: "vuole essere un esempio di come la donna può descrivere se stessa adottando un stile sintetico-realistico, e propone un modello di eroina vitalistico-ottimista."[5] However, this "modello di eroina" as well as Robert's "descrizione di se stessa" parrots (or pirates) the destructive and aggressive "fervore, coraggio e la forza assoluta" outlined in "Il Manifesto del Futurismo," which was designed to exalt a masculine productivity at the expense

of female (re)productivity. This process of "futurization" [sic] entails a radical negation of otherness (sexual difference), not only morphologically, but also anatomically. Thus, for Robert, in order for women to liberate themselves from the chains of the old "illusione di dominio" they must transcend the limitations of the female body and social conditioning to reach a hermaphroditic, superior state of productivity, which does not just simply re-produce, but actively produces a new consciousness for women.

Un ventre di donna, formalistically constructed as a collage of diary and epistolary narrative styles, represents a fusion of the private or individual consciousness with a dialogic and diagnostic adaptation of futurism. The diary-styled writing documents the discontent of a thirty-year-old bourgeois woman, her struggle with abdominal cancer and her intellectual battle against the maladies of bourgeois society. As a private form of writing, Robert's diary traces and visualizes her own understanding of the epistemological rupture from the decadence of the *fin-de-siècle* to the "movimento futurista"—a transcendence of what Marinetti called the "fontana malata" to a "coscienze molteplici e simultanee in uno stesso individuo."[6] Hence, like Marinetti, Robert turns in the (diseased) idealistic and statuesque "bello della Vittoria di Samotracia," for the velocity and explosiveness of the automobile, the "passione, arte e idealismo dello sport."[7] In correspondence with the epistemological rupture, the text thematically splits in half: while Robert delegates half of the text to the destruction of the infectious, "dead forms" of the old order, the other half, especially the ending, presents the emergence of the heroine in the "new order." Physical and mental pain become the bridge in this evolution, leading the heroine away from death into a new (future) life—"passione e arte."

The epistolary-styled narration mirrors this textual splitting by presenting two distinct dialogues: the first, an imaginary exchange with Elenora Duse, who represents the antithetical model of the D'Annunzian woman which Robert ultimately rejects; and the second, a real exchange of letters with Marinetti, (then fighting in the trenches of World War I), provides both a prescriptive cure for the heroine's condition and an epistemological serum for her to consume. The text, as the body of the heroine herself, displays the personalization and internalization of the suffering and pain caused by the social and physical confines of "bourgeois" culture and the physically degenerated form of womanhood (symbolized by the uterus). At the same time, this physical suffering transforms itself into a metaphorical struggle against a series of social conventions: "la lotta contro una medicina che la ignora, la guerra al moralismo piccolo borghese, la comparasa, in luogo della figure della madre sentimentale, del mito vital-efficientistico della fecondazione."[8] Although the body is the locus of this battle, it is the purging or ejection of these forms of "debolezza" which leads to the

remaking of the heroine as a "futurista," not in body, but in spirit. By privileging the spirit or mind over the body, Robert detaches herself from the limitations of the feminine body, rendering the female body as a surface of social inscriptions which must be painfully carved out in order not only to prove endurance, but also to transcend "femininity" altogether.

This mind/body split is foregrounded not only in the "body" of the text, but also in the placement of theauthorial voice. *Un ventre di donna*, although primarily written by Robert with the exception of a series of letters by Marinetti, is co-signed by Marinetti. In addition, the framing of the text as an object privileges Marinetti's signature, which appears first apparently giving the text more validity and authority, yet it simultaneously confuses the position of the authorial voice. While the appearance of Marinetti's signature provides an authorization of the text, it is his "Name" which becomes the symbol of mastery, displacing Robert's original position as author. Furthermore, not only does Robert use Marinetti's "Name," but she posits him as the authority (master, doctor, healer, guide) of the Futurist discourse in which she engages. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Robert re-establishes a hierarchy, (where man speaks and woman mimics), advancing a strategy of invisibleness in relation to the authoritative voice of her own text, precisely because she has assimilated to a masculine model, which undermines her position as "subject" within her own discourse. The problem of "l'illusione di dominio," instead of being undermined by the Futurist movement, re-emerges as a more extreme and aggressive domination of the masculine imaginary over the female body and mind. *Un ventre di donna*, as Robert herself, becomes a mouthpiece, an instrument through which Futurism speaks and experiments on the female body and mind. Rather than speaking in a position of mastery, it speaks through a series of inscriptions. The objectification of the body as a reference to the (dis)placed self indirectly amounts to the mimicking of a subordinate role—the female as receptacle, a receptacle of not only the bourgeois morbus, but also a receptacle of/for Futurist indoctrinations (at the expense of sexual difference). However, as Luce Irigaray explains:

> The "receptacle" receives the marks of everything, understands and includes everything—except itself. . . . The receptacle can reproduce everything, mime everything, except itself, it is the womb of mimicry.[9]

Therefore, as a receptacle of Futurist critique and (re-)education, Robert ironically inverts her original intention (becoming one and the same as man) to that of an analysis of the maladies of Futurism.

Although Robert acknowledges a certain violence of representation in the

image of woman invented by the *fin-de-siècle* poets, she does not launch an attack against the process of representation itself, but takes the images (the products themselves) as the focus for her critique. As a consequence, instead of dismantling the apparatus of representation Robert dismembers the female body—the object of representation—leaving the feminine in the realm of fragmentation and suffering. By remaining within a strictly phallocratic discourse, Robert reveals the "lack" of a feminine-gendered speaking subject, a lack of self-definition and discourse space. Without symbolic placement or feminine discourse, "La donna lascia credere che ciò sia vero perché quasi sempre le fa più comodo adoperare la propria debolezza apparente come un'arma fra le sue più valide." Adriana Cavarero explains that within the phallocratic or symbolic discourse:

> Woman is not the subject of her language, her language is not hers. She therefore speaks and represents herself in a language not her own, that is through the categories of the other [in this case in reference to the phallus], she thinks herself as thought by the other. . . Discourse carries the sign of its subject, the speaking subject who in discourse speaks **himself** and speaks a world starting from **himself.**[10]

Thus sexual differene masks an erasure of the discourse of the other (in this case the feminine). It is precisely this masquerade of sexual difference which Robert collapses in her drive for that which Irigaray calls "Sameness"—the desire to articulate herself as one (a masculine speakinq subject). However, in this unmasking of the masculine economy of representation (a violence enacted on a silenced other), Robert does not appropriate the site of sexual difference and hence exploitation (the female body), but exposes it as an open wound, an absence, a lack, a silence. Robert mimics the violence of representation, directed at her own sex and body.

Although *Un ventre di donna* does not lend itself too easily to the agenda of modern feminism, it poses and foregrounds many problems plaguing feminists today, such as the question of female subjectivity (authorial voice) and the question of writing the body—whether it is possible to write without speaking as a masculine subject and whether it is possible to write the body without violating the body in some profound way. I will discuss Robert's *Un ventre di donna* in relation to the agenda of Futurism, since it not only appropriates Futurist discourse and stance in regard to women, but is formed as an intra/intertextual discourse with Marinetti. Therefore, instead of attempting to incorporate Robert into feminist discourse, I read *Un ventre di donna* as an ironic text which exposes a series of contradictions, neuroses, male-paranoias and ultimately a schizophrenic polemical practice, present not only in Robert's

writing, but also embedded within Futurist discourse itself. Although I may be treating Robert's intentions unjustly by readinq the text as an ironic mimicry of a predominantly masculinist and misogynist Avant-garde movement, I feel it is more beneficial to pursue the aspect of mimicry where I can interpret the internalization of misogyny which amounts to a rigorous self-critique bordering on self-hatred and self-mutilation as a symptom of the desire for "Sameness," rather than a necessary step in the process of women's liberation. That is not to say that Robert's critique of the status of women is not valid as a necessary process of exposing the logic of othering—the act of representing and hence reducing others (in this case women) to universal mythic categories. The problem lies in the conversion of a self-critique into a self-hatred, the rendering of the feminine as the un-hygienic wound. Therefore, I will divide my analysis of the text in accordance with its structural and thematic splitting: the unmaking of wom(b)an, and the making of the "donna futurista," wom( )an, where the body as woman is left in the realm of pain and "il vuoto assoluto."

Un ventre di donna reflects the conflicting desires and aspirations of Futurism, which articulate a sadistic destruction of the amorous and consuming "fatale femme" [sic] and equally fatal mother, displacing the desire for woman (as a sexual object) to the (masochistic) machine and the image of the mother from the anatomical nurturing body to the metaphysical mystic or "fuliggini celesti," un "Materno fossato quasi pieno di un'acqua fangosa."[11] While the stripping of the real woman from these (bourgeois) mythic models of representation merely returns woman to another set of myths (sending the form of woman into a metaphysical abstraction), this dialectic of symbolic images contains within it a subversive potential—demythification of universalizing mythic categories in the dominant institutions of bourgeois culture. However, the aim of Futurism is not to liberate women from the "prostitituzione legale" and the "mascherata di ipocrisie" of the family; instead it is a liberation of the male from an infectious feminization of society.[12]

Robert clearly agrees with the Futurists, that the moralistic and "fatale" woman (such as Elenora Duse) symbolizes death in life. Robert distances herself from these "cadaveri vestiti di pellicce calde" by allying herself with the Futurists in their call for a radical and violent negation of the seuctive power of the vampiric woman.[13] However, for her this negation is not a radical separation of the sexes (as the Futurists demand), but a dialectical transcendence from a constituted identity (a demeaning stereotype) to a more superior identity (a desire for masculine power), in order to liberate women from their stereotypical role as "le donne che divorano il sesso dei prigionieri italiani" (170). Robert vehemently critiques those women who accommodate themselves to "la propria debolezza"—a pre-established role, inherently "weak" since it is not self-created, but

reproduced. For Robert, as for the Futurists, seduction is a secondary power—a passive power that traps and consumes "unadulterated" masculine power is active, pene-trating, cutting—come "la rosa spada del sole che schermeggia per la prima volta." Futurism adopts a Sadian model, equating the mother/woman with secondary nature—soft molecules which are subject to the laws of creation, conservation, reproduction, and death. Hence the mother/feminine symbolizes the antithesis of masculine potency. Gilles Deleuze explains that within the logic of sadism the father by contrast, "represents intrinsically primary nature, which is beyond all constituted order and is made up of wild lacerating molecules that carry disorder and anarchy."[14] Thus, at the same time the father acts on the severity of his agency, he destroys order, law and the institution of the family, marking the end of procreation and the commencement of the Sadian automation. Within the Deleuzian understanding of the Sadian economy, it follows that men belong to nature only via "social conservatism," and are subject to sadistic violence only insofar as they depart from their "essential" anarchic nature (becoming part of what Robert calls the "cretinismo maschile e di pudori"), while women become the sadistic victims *par excellence*, since they are victimized for upholding their "true nature." However, the Futurists distinguish between the essential (anatomical) and the normative (morphological) formations of identity: Valentine Saint-Point argues, "È ASSURDO DIVIDERE L'UMANITÀ IN DONNE E UOMINI; essa è composta soltanto di FEMMINILITÀ e di MASCOLINITÀ."[15] Despite the fact that the Futurists believe women are made and not born, ie. gender is not an innate feature (as sex maybe), but a socio-cultural construction, and precisely for that reason is oppressive to women, the Futurists do not explode the pre-existing content of essentialist ideology, but authorize the patriarchial hegemony, in yet a more extreme, "pure" manifestation. While the Futurists attempt to deconstruct the mechanisms of othering/engendering of the sexes, they collapse sexual difference into the economy of the same—paradoxically validating the traditionally established "essential" qualities of man. Rather than exploring the fluidity of difference, Futurism calls for the negation of the poetics of the body and a promotion of its regimentation and mechanization.

Along with the debased power of seduction which primarily preys off the desires of the flesh, Robert rejects the libidinal drives of the female body as deficient, passive, self-embracing rather than "lacerating," as transferring desire to the realm of self-expression: "spiego con ardore la mia passione del nuovo. Le mie impressioni sul Futurismo come caotica forma d'avanguardia" (93). Instead of reproducing herself as the seductive woman who is also devoured by the prisons of bourgeois institutions—the "prostituzione legale" of the family, parliament or a victim of (mis)representation—Robert explores the "passione

via arte" which she attributes to the Futurists, a passion that is inextricably tied to anarchic actions, a passion (a pure agency) that cannot accumulate, possess or consume, but one that must risk (if not demand) its own destruction. This Futuristic passion reacts against an infinite continuity (as passivism) with a (de-humanized) desire for infinite destruction, based on the principle that one cannot possess what is lost.[16] Destruction becomes the only vald expenditure of energy; a violence that does not distinguish itself along political lines, but defines itself as a binary opposite of the passive yet **consuming** feminine.

For Robert these objectless passions and desires are expressed through a "caotica forma d'avanguardia," a chaos designed to revolutionize the old (romantic or nostalgic) order which left her trapped in "il vuoto assoluto," where as "una vedova e bella a venticinque anni avrei duovuto **subire la legge impostami dalla società** e specialmente dalle mie amiche rimaritarmi" (3, emphasis mine). However, this process of de-objectification of desire is prefaced with physical pain. It is only through a sadistic economy of destruction or "laceration" that the Futurists move beyond the possessive order and accumulative desires; however, Robert reflects this process as an internalization of this sadistic economy, where pain becomes the only means of interrupting the placement of women within the bourgeois code of social behavior. Futurism's movement away from the communal (the emotional and the objectification of the perceptual) world leaves (especially) woman, who has no discursive historical reference, with no other referent but the human body—being acted upon, inscribed on. Thus, without emasculating herself—adopting phallocentric discourse—Robert would be left in the silence of pain, with no objects of her own.

Robert does not embrace the ideal of the mechanization of the male body as much as the move to strip away the "old" regimes which imprison the female within her body. However, Robert does not advocate the liberation of the female body nor the mechanization of the female body (which would merely replace her to the "funzione conservatrice della specie"), rather she focuses on chaos as a violent disruption of the bourgeois regimes, where the female body itself becomes a necessary sacrifice for liberation. Yet, what Robert seeks to "liberate" remains ambiguous—the body of the heroine is "liberated" only by the elimination of her reproductive capacity. Freedom from the animalistic condition of woman is defined by an escape into the imaginary (via mind and spirit); however, the only means of liberating the esoteric energies of the mind is through language, a symbolic language that is already laden with a history of phallogocentric coating (meaning).

Robert's heroine rebels against this social positioning of woman within the realm of marriage—as a submission to the laws of private property. Instead of allowing herself to be remarried she finds "il corpo di un'uomo simpatico

intelligente che oggi si chiama lui," a nameless man who also functions as a father to her son. Although she later names him (Gulio), she refuses to enunciate "family" names which would allude to the patrilineal history as a system of ownership and subordination of women. Robert represents her heroine as an independent woman with a "spirito scontento, ironico, scatta via" (4). In addition to the denial of the name which would incorporate her within a system of patrilineage Robert rejects the name of the father—the faith in the Word of God which inhibits a freedom of action and will:

> Dio?? Chi è Dio, Dov'è? Il conforto suprannaturale non ha per me alcuna importanza . . . la vuota immagine del Dio barbuto venerato dalla gente ignorante e la idea astratta di un Dio invisibile creatore del mondo. . . . (60)

For Robert Christianity as the faith in God symbolizes another prison of the imagination; faith reinforces the weakness and ignorance of the masses, who are more comfortable holding on to their own static beliefs and positions rather than acting on their own imagination and wills. Hence Robert's adaptation of Futurist discourse reveals more than a simple mimicry of phallocentric discourse, since the Law itself is considered a secondary (feminine?) delegated power dependent on a supreme principle o Good or morality. By rejecting the moral foundations of the Law, Robert reduces, as do the Futurists, the Law to a repression of desire and the will to power. Therefore, Robert opens a discourse on the seemingly closed circuit of morality, which merely tends toward the repetition of a state of equilibrium based on a need to believe in objects (specifically phallic) that are already solidly determined. Although Futurism itself is based on masculine paramaters, it views upholding the Law as an acceptance of silence, death as a condition of remaining subject to phallocratic discourse and its institutions. This perception of morality as death reduces the Good (on which bourgeois institutions are "hypocritically" based) to nothingness. Ironically, instead of pursuing a critique of phallocratic discourse, Robert adopts a more extreme version of that very discourse (unmasked aggression) as a means of militarizing the feminine.

It is the desire to speak that becomes the act of passion (the act of violence or in Robert's case a violation of the feminine as it was constituted by a male tradition) which necessitates the destruction of the institutions which maintain bourgeois (feminine?) hegemony (via "la legge") and challenges the narratives which legitimize this hegemony. Gramsci similarly expressed an enthusiasm for Futurism's vivacious will to "tear asunder" the hegemonic power which forces "submission to the laws through which it orchestrates social positioning":

> I Futuristi hanno svolto questo compito nel campo della cultura Borghese . . . hanno distrutto . . . senza preoccuparsi—se le nuove creazioni, prodotte dalla

> loro attivita fossero nel complesso un'opera superiore . . . hanno avuto fiducia in se stessi, nella foga della energie giovani.[17]

Although Robert was not concerned with drawing on Futurism as a model for a possible proletariat entrance into the arts, both Robert and Gramsci agree that Futurism provides a space for marginal groups such as women and the proletariat not only because of its radical opposition to bourgeois institutions, but also because of its ability to integrate (a predominately male) high culture with a low culture (a possible inclusion of the economic and sexual other). The "foga della energie giovani" or the "forma caotica" promises a certain implosion of the bourgeois system, by challenging the pre-ordained "decency" and "normalcy" of bourgeois traditions and institutions—a challenge of faith. However, Gramsci, distanced himself politically from the Avant-garde, which remained attached to bourgeois society precisely because it needed money. He did not praise Futurism for its social platform, but as an agent of delegitimization of the laws of the superstructure. However, it is this attachment not only to the economic system, but also to the superstructure itself (specifically its patriarchal aspects), that problematizes the process of deconstructing the dominant (economic, moral and ideological) system. As Walter Benjamin explains: "War and war only can set a goal for mass movements on the largest scale while respecting the traditional property."[18] While Futurism rejects the bourgeois system of values (including property ownership under the laws of capitalism), morals and "democratic" institutions which are preceived as robbing the people of their real existence and giving the masses a false sense of pride, it mimics the mechanical system of production, displacing macro-political power onto gendered power relations. Thus the Futurists encode their own war against the bourgeois modes of enculturation with all of its repressive institutions as a rejection of the "feminization" of society. Violence and aggression not only become an aesthetic ideal, but a constant process, a permanent revolution rather than an organized political movement.

Although Marinetti disregards any feminist "equal rights" movement as purely a submission to further inoctrinations of the pre-existing system of moral order, he regards feminism as a means to imploding those very institutions of law and order. For Marinetti, not only would women's infiltration into the parliament and law-making institutions cause the destruction of the nuclear family (primarily of mammismo), but it would prove to be an "animalizzazione totale della politica,"and ultimately lead to the death of "parlamentarismo." Therefore, while women would be participating in the illusion of government representation, "un governo composto di donne o sostenuto dalle donne ci trascinerebbe fatalmente, per vie di pacifismo e di viltà tolstoiana, ad un trionfo

del clericalismo e dell'ipocrisia moralista."[19] Paradoxically Marinetti relies on the traditional myths of essentialism, yet he recognizes their historical and socio-cultural specificity. His philosophical critique of the feminist agenda (which most likely he borrowed from Valentine de Saint-Point) reflects this paradox by displaying primarily a misogynist interpretation of the female sex; however, Marinetti had an advanced understanding of the ideological implications of equality of the sexes within a predominately patriarchial culture. As Teresa de Lauretis explains, feminism's fight for women's equality with men is misdirected since equality is "an ideological attempt to subject women even further, to prevent the expression of their own sense of existence, and to foreclose the road to woman's liberation."[20] Equality becomes what Irigaray calls a masquerade, which, unlike the play of mimicry, contains no intentional irony—a polemical gesture aimed at the condemnation of the patriarchy and its power structures. It is an unconscious mimicry which masks a re-submission to the domination of the patriarchy. Thus, there are no equal rights under laws and institutions which protect private property, whether that property is defined as capital or the possession of a husband or wife. Justice as well as the equal representation put forward by the parliamentary system and the ideology of the state apparatus become a farce not only in the platonic sense, but also in respect to the high ideals on which the hegemonic (patriarchial) system legitimizes its authority. Therefore, in order to achieve freedom from the hypocrisy of the bourgeois system—from the "prostituzione legale" and the "illusione di dominio"—the Futurists do not support the idea of historical necessity, but an epistemological rupture from the continuum of historical (and I would argue patriarchal) thought.

The paradox in this Futurist unmaking of organized politics and political/moral discourse is that woman is simultaneously perceived as a prisoner of that very discourse while she is also absent from that discourse—she is consistently being spoken for, yet she is inaudible or inexpressible. According to De Lauretis "woman is displayed as a spectacle [in Robert "un ventre," "un utero sofferente," "un materno fossato," "cadaveri vestiti di pellicce calde," etc.] and yet unrepresented, a being whose existence specifically is simultaneously asserted and denied, negated and controlled [where] the body itself becomes an object of manipulation to 'la fredda esplorazione professionale'." *Un ventre di donna* reveals this paradoxical situation when the heroine claims: "non credevo che il mio podere violato da una mano tecnica [which belongs to the doctor she names Jack lo sventratore], dovesse tanto soffrire . . . la più inaspetta sensazione erotica" (26). While she declares "scienza impotente che sei il peggior bacillo che infesti il mondo" (160), she is fascinated by the "tools" which are used to dismember her body, as well as the "tools" of Futurist poetics prescribed by Marinetti, because these "tools" symbolize a source of power—to which she is forced to

submit. Thus, the body (feminine terrain) is the locus of pain and the voice is the locus of power (masculine). However, she is excluded from the language of medicine (or scientific discourse) by doctors who find her incapable not only of understanding the maladiesof her own body, but incapable of emotionally accepting the gravity of her situation. Thus, her body becomes a "spectacle" which is manipulated as an object, made knowable by scientific experimentation, yet "unrepresented"—she is denied entrance into a discourse on her own body. Scientific discourse as science itself becomes a weapon used against her, instead of a tool of recitation. Within medical or scientific discourse the heroine becomes an unreliable narrator of her own bodily events. Here Robert reveals science, not only as a violation (if not a rape) of the patient who has no choice other than to suffer the consequences ("carne bruciata," in "silenzio caldo" / "silenzio freddo"), but as a silencing of the patient's expression of sentient content. By bypassing the voice of the patient, Jack lo sventratore also bypasses the bodily event, as a painful experience. Hence, he not only "rips" out her "natural" power of reproduction, but denies her any entrance into a dialogue with a medical practice performed on her body. Without an understanding of the procedures enacted on her body she is left only with her sensory facilities and with the experience of pain, completely helpless in relation to the "fredda esplorazione professionale": "sente il freddo della lama che affonda nella carme floscia . . . sente un getto di pus caldo sul ventre ghiacciato" (82). The heroine identifies only with the delicacy of the flesh which is subjected not only to the uncontrollable infection ("getti di pus"), but the penetration of science—the intrusion of the blade, the inspection which makes the unknown knowable, and finally the violation of that flesh by the hand of Jack lo sventratore who carves out her womb. The unmaking of the heroine's womb deconstructs the institution of medicine's masquerade of aid or healing, since the doctor is at once made the actual agent of the pain (violation) and the demonstration of the effects of pain on the human body. In addition, the symbolic dismembering of the heroine reflects not only the decapitation of her sentient experiences, but also the violence of representation which dissects (makes knowable) and assigns identities the other (in this case dehumanizing the wom(b)an).

The more the heroine demands access to the knowledge of her own physical condition the more she is ignored and driven to anger; the heroine retaliates by calling the doctors "assassini, i macellai sveglia . . . **la mia carne è mia!**" (81, emphasis mine). However, these outbursts are interpreted by the doctors as "vigliaccheria." Therefore, at the same time that she is reduced to the sentient language of the body, it is the perceptible and emotional qualities which are left to the unseen and unheard—invisible geography—while the body itself is objectified, manipulated and dismembered (silenced). Robert not only emphasizes

the lack of control of the heroine/patient in regard to the doctors or "assassini," but the body itself becomes an uncontrollable force turned against her: "ma trovato diffusissimo il male necessità di **asportare tutto**, profonde sutore dell'utero, che **cominciava ad intaccarsi**" (69, emphasis mine).

Ironically this simultaneous negation of the female body and decapitation of woman (an exclusion of women from a dialogue with phallocentric discourse) is precisely one of the aims of Futurism. In his article "Contro il matrimonio" Marinetti calls for a radical separation of the sexes designed to protect men from "la piccola femmina come piccoli cicisbei o piccoli stupidi."[21] Although Marinetti claims "bisogna metterle [le donne] a posto," he replaces the dangerous seductive women with woman as a waste product: "**nel letto di un tubercolotico**, sotto la lingua di un vecchio, sotto i pugni di un nevrastenico, **fra le pagine di un dizionario** come una foglia secca, **in una tomba**, in una cassaforte o in una cloaca, ma bisogna metterle a posto."[22] Although Marinetti postulates that the root of the problem emerges from a tradition of mis-education of women, he does not propose are-education of women (to equal that of man), but calls for the distancing of the real women who carry the baggage of social conditioning. Hélène Cixous argues that this dynamic positioning of the absent woman/other supports itself on the desire to "keep women in their place":

> . . . to keep women in their place of mystery . . . to keep her at a distance. [Where] she is always not quite there . . . but no one knows where she is. She is silence. Silence is the mark of hysteria; she is aphonic . . . [she is] decapitated.[23]

Cixous sees woman decapitated by the same patriarchial system which bases its (Oedipal) "Law" on a threat of castration: while men submit to the "Law" with a fear of castration, women's tongues are cut off and "what talks isn't heard because it's the body that talks, and man doesn't hear the body."[24] Thus, he possesses the impotent power of giving fixed (dead) identities, while she ("la donna fa credere che ciò sia vero perché quasi sempre le fa comodo adoperare la propria debolezza apparente come un'arma fra le sue più valide") remains inaudible, yet always already represented by the other—a dum(b)ping ground for a "stock of images" to which man sought to define himself in opposition.

Similarly Robert agrees to the silencing (if not dismembering) of the female body—as a disempowerment of the seductive body, a body which imprisons the imaginative power (masculinity) of women. However, this silencing is directed to acculturation of the real woman in the role of the "feminine," and specifically the socio-historical positioning of women within traditional institutions as reflected through mass culture. Robert (as the Futurists) primarily reacts to the "feminization" of mass culture as an agent of cultural indoctrination, rejecting

the *fin-de-siècle* model of woman as well as the contemporary women's writing (letteratura rosa): "Sarebbe dunque l'ora di smettere il tono civettuolo e inconcludente che é caratteristico della letteratura muliebre d'oggi, e di cominciare con energia l'enunciazione . . . della anime nostre" (ix), and the body that "porta via i germi della maldicenza, sottile abilità donnesca, paziente ricamo femminile in cui ogni traforo é un tranello" (158). By de-activating this "tranello donnesco" Robert attempts to impregnate women with the primary power of language. The access to symbolic language, however does not female imaginary, but adopts masculine parameters. According to Julia Kristeva the aping of the phallic model or "saming" leaves woman to think of herself as impregnated by the Word, where "she should live and think of herself as a male homosexual."[25] Robert reveals the ambiguous placement of woman within this homosexual economy which causes her heroine to confuse the desire to be a man—"io penso che sarei stata un poco pittore e un poco poeta, se fossi nata uomo; l'amore non mi basta; mi sento veramente in questo momento, poco donna" (4)—with the desire for man as pure spirit—"un'altra realtà, un'altra gioia, un capriccio senza forma, un altro uomo, senza corpo e senza voce, un tipo astratto" (4), yet she dismisses this desire as "una pazzia." It is the denunciation of the feminine body and all of its associated "images" (specifically the power of fecundity symbolized by the womb) which displaces the Futurist women's sexual identity, where they become asexual (bodies without organs), guardians of the patriarchal (symbolic) order, even in its most misogynistic and sadistic forms. This "displacement" of women essentially amounts to their removal of the threatening woman—the woman who possesses the uncontrollable power of both life (as "il materno fossato") and death (as the femme fatale). From Kristeva's point of view, Robert's self-alignment with the symbolic Word of man positions her as one of ·the Electras, militants in the cause of the father, frigid with exaltation—they are dramatic figures emerging at the point where the social consen-sus corners any woman who wants to escape her condition: 'nuns', 'revolutionaries', even 'feminists'?"[26] However, in the case of Futurism these "militant daughters," become accomplices in the sadistic war against the mother/other, which ironically forces them to deny their own physical existence. Within this "homosexual" economy the daughter becomes an accomplice to the patriarchy expressing her sadistic desires to negate the material and biological nature of the mother. Although Deleuze does not account for the circumstances in which women develop a desire to become part of the sadistic order, he postulates that the only point of entrance for women within the sadistic system is in her "elevation to an incestuous accomplice of the father."[27]

In order for Robert to become an "accomplice" to Futurism she associates with the masculine obsession of gendered violence, which becomes more of a

threat to herself as woman than to her male counterparts, since not only do men possess control over the productions of mass culture, but she must internalize this gendered violence as a self-mutilation (masochistically). Robert responds to this sexual anxiety—fear of the uncontrollable female potency, and of the castrating female—by relinquishing all the "symbolic" powers associated with women, and those physical apparatuses which pose a threat to male potency.

Robert does not search for a place for the female body, nor does she explore the female body. For her the body is a "cadaver in warm fur," it is an open wound which if it cannot be erased it must at least be endured; she re-places the body from the site/function of the breeding ground to that of the infection, and as a consequence, lays it in the hospital bed—immobile and unrepresentable. Her adaptation of the fear of the uncontrollable generative mother repels her from the body and leads her toward a respect for the body of the other, her fellow man, her brother. This sadistic process of negating the mother is mirrored in Robert's unmaking of her heroine's body as a necessary sacrifice of her own feminine and motherly qualities. The surgical removal of the womb leaves the female body as a vacuum, a void containing only negativity and death. In a letter to the heroine, Marinetti draws an analogy between her dismembered "ventre" (as the site of origination of man) and that of the "ventre" of the trenches which contain the dismemberment of the male body (the serialization of society via war, the final destination of man):

> Il vostro ventre è profondamente simbolico. Infatti il vostro ventre somiglia a quello della terra, che ha oggi un'immensa ferita chirurgica di trincee . . . la vostra ferita è identica alla nostra, il terreno che ci divide dal nemico. (113)

Marinetti encodes this sacrifice of fecundity as a sympathetic patriotic act—it is the destruction or sterilization of not only the site of reproduction, but the product of the reproductive process itself, the implosion of "il golfo carnale." Although the heroine generates new symbolic analogies as a "celestial belly," it is a belly that, instead of generating, consumes. This again replaces the body as vacuum, privileging the creativity of the imagination over that of the body—mind/spirit over body. Georges Bataille explains that "the body [within a sadistic economy] becomes a thing, vile, slavish, servile, just like a stone or a piece of wood, only the spirit with its intimate and subjective truth cannot be reduced to a thing."[28] Thus, it is the sacred housed in a profane body, which Robert attempts to liberate. Although Robert's ultimate goal is equality of the sexes, at least in respect to the education and modeling of women after th male imaginary, *Un ventre di donna* articulates woman as a suffering wound (womb), also revealing the irony and schizophrenia of a woman who cannot escape the profane bar of sexual difference. Within the imaginary the heroine's stomach can be stretched out on

the battle field (placed in the celestial mud); however, her desire for sameness appears as an empty hope, returning her once again to the space of a lack, a wound: "Che schifo essere un utero sofferente, mentre tutti gli uomini si battono e pensano che non ho nemmeno il coraggio di supportare le iniezioni" (26). The heroine's desire for inclusion in phallocentriç discourse and garrulous agencies is counteracted by her revelation of the birthing process itself—she reflects "ecco la mia creatura, nata da me, voluta da me, portata da me, nel mio ventre" (4).

Robert never resolves this dichotomy of the pleasure of giving birth (generative power) and that of sacrificing the body in order to prove herself not only equal to man's ability to withstand pain (as in the case of the men in the trenches), but also eliminating the threat of female generative power (womb envy, which is also displaced onto seduction). Although Robert models the womb after the Futurist conception of the city—that must be destroyed in order to be rebuilt for each generation—, this loss, lack or wound is not welcomed without remorse. By stripping away the pre-established feminine powers the heroine places herself in an ambiguous space—a body without organs which contains the imagination and ideology of the Futurist man, but is not quite one. Thus, this space becomes a non-space, a void ("il vuoto assoluto"), where the heroine can be neither completely male, nor female, her place is one of silence and pain from which a self-hatred emerges, reflected in her intricate detailing of not only the maladies of her body, but also the surgical process itself. Not only does the heroine express a resentment for being "un utero sofferente," that cannot fight amongst men, but also a resentment for no longer being a woman:

> Non mi lasci dunque nemmeno ridere, odioso nemico rifugiato là dove dovrebbe solo palpitare un largo fiore fecondo? Tu mordi i miei figli quelli che aspetterei formarsi e vivere sotto il getto raggiante della creazione. Tu distruggi il mio fervore materno, e mi dilanii. (201)

Robert demonstrates a slippage in the masquerade (the attempt to ape the phallic model) as the revenge of the body that not only cannot be masculinized, but also no longer contains the (albeit "secondary") power of reproduction. Although *Un ventre di donna* presents an alternative discourse for women's writing—an exploration of the imaginary via Futurism—the heroine returns to the discourse of the body, yet this time a wounded body (and a wounded spirit), a body (and an imaginary sensitivity) in pain—"mi rende la fede nella mia carne, salda fede che la scienza stessa tentava di togliermi" (84).

Ironically, Robert uses physical pain as a vehicle of transcendence, a substitute for the death of the mother (female anatomy) only to be reborn in phallocentric discourse. However, as Elaine Scarry explains, pain, as death, is the most intensive negation, the purest expression of anti-human annihilation

where "all the contents of consciousness are destroyed":

> Pain disintegrates perception—contents of consciousness are obliterated during those moments, the name of one's child, the memory of a friend's face are all absent . . . the created world of thought and feeling, all the psychological and mental content that constructs both one's self and one's world, and that which gives rise to, and is in turn made possible by language exist.[29]

Instead of transcending the body, Robert emphasizes woman's carnal engufment. Even if she believes this eradication of the womb to be a purification, she concludes *Un ventre di donna* focusing on the "fibre rosse della mia carne più pura," directing her "spirito aggressivo" towards her own desire for "una povera vendetta" she holds against the fecundity of other women's "ventre isterico"—"Voglio denudare la bruna nervosità di questa fragile donnina dagli occhi grandi troppo spesso spalancati sul mare" (209). Hence, Robert's initial militant desire to negate ("mammismo" and the seductive women) transposes into resentment of women (as a male homosexual, a womb envy) once she is re-placed in the text as a body without organs. Although the dismembering of her anatomy allows her to distance herself from the "second sex," and enter into a discourse with Marinetti, she remains (placed) in the hospital bed—accentuating the painful process of women entering into a male dominated movement/discourse. According to Scarry, as the body breaks down, "the voice becomes the final source of self extension . . . so long as one is speaking the self extends out beyond the boundaries of the body, and occupies a space much larger than the body."[30] This becomes Robert's only means of survival. Ironically, this self-extension via the imaginary (that which is diametrically opposed to the entrapment in the sensory body) is prescribed by Marinetti. Yet this projection of the self outside of the body once again returns to a phallocentric splitting of the mind and the body—a semantic distance between the maker (the mind) and the receiver (the body or the other) which secures for the self a position of mastery. In addition, the very belief that the voice or the imaginary extends the self assumes a mind-body split of which Robert proves herself to be incapable, since even her Futurist writing eventually returns to the body.

Contrary to Marinetti's analogical interpretation the womb as a wound of a nation, the heroine embarks on her own exploration of Futurist writing,based on her sentient experiences of pain and sense of loss. However, she goes no further than to demonstrate the violence of representing the feminine within Futurist phallocentric discourse—and the impossibility of creating a feminine subjectivity within that discourse. Through a process of mimicry, Robert expresses the desire for equality, which essentially means becoming a man, yet she also reveals the inescapability of the female body, by returing to even an

empty womb—de-naturalizing only herself in the process.

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Notes

[1]F. T. Marinetti, "Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo" and "Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo", 1910, *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano de Maria (Milan: Mondadori, 1968) 10-11, 293.

[2]Enif Robert, "Come si seducono le donne," *L'Italia futurista* 2.36 (31 December 1917), rpt. in *Le futuriste*, by Claudia Salaris (Milan: Edizioni delle Donne, 1982) 111.

[3]Enif Robert, "Una parola serena", *L'Italia futurista* 2.30, (7 October 1917), rpt. in *Le futuriste* 108.

[4]Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender Politics and the Avant-garde* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990) 26.

[5]Claudia Salaris, futuriste: donne e letteratura d'avanguardia in Italia (Milan: Edizioni delle Donne, 1982) 61.

[6]Salaris 61.

[7]Marinetti, "Distruzione della sintassi - Immaginazione senza fili - Parole in libertà" (11 May 1913), *Teoria e invenzione futurista* 66.

[8]Marinetti, "Distruzione della sintassi" 68.

[9]Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 98.

[10]Adriana Cavarero, "Towards a Theory of Sexual Difference," *Diotima*, rpt. in *Sexual Difference*, ed. and trans. Teresa De Lauretis (Bloomington: Milan Women's Bookstore Collective-Indiana UP,) 47.

[11]Marinetti, "Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo" 7.

[12]Marinetti, "Contro il matrimonio," *Democrazia futurista, Teoria e invenzione futurista* 369.

[13]Enif Robert and F. T. Marinetti, *Un ventre di donna* (Milan: Facchi, 1919) 157-58. All further references to this text will be noted parenthetically within the body of the paper.

[14]Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*, trans. Jean McNeil (Cambridge: Zone-MIT P, 1989) 59. Original French published in 1967.

[15]Valentine De Saint-Point, "Manifesto della donna futurista," rpt. in *Le futuriste* 31.

[16]Fernando Pessoa, *Always Astonished*, trans. Edwin Honig (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988) 78. Ferdinando Pessoa explains that Futurism seeks in relativity, "that is, in what it calls physical transcendentalism, the creative reason of impressions, but it seeks only their physical outer, superficial and empirical reason, and not their

metaphysical, intimate, deep abysic one."

[17]Antonio Gramsci, "Marinetti rivoluzionario?", *L'ordine nuovo* (5 Jan. 1921), rpt. in. *Scritti politici*, ed. Paolo Spriano, 1st ed. (Rome: Riuniti, 1967) 396. Note that the article was not signed.

[18]Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry John (New York: Schochen Books, 1968) 241.

[19]Marinetti, "Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo" 296.

[20]Teresa De Lauretis, "The Essence of the Triangle or, Taking the Risk of Essentialism Seriously: Feminist Theory in Italy, the U.S. and Britain," *Differences* 1.3 (Summer 1989): 17.

[21]Marinetti, "Contro il matrimonio," *Democrazia futurista, Teoria e invenzione futurista* 370.

[22]Marinetti, "Contro il matrimonio" 370-71, emphasis mine.

[23]Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?", *Out There*, eds. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. MinhHa and Cornel West, New Museum of Contemporary Art Ser. (Cambridge: MIT P, 1990) 352-53.

[24]Cixous 353.

[25]Julia Kristeva, "About Chinese Women," *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 147.

[26]Kristeva 152.

[27]Kristeva 152.

[28]Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986) 158.

[29]Elaine Scarry [William T. Fitts], *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) 18.

[30]Scarry 33.

Futurism, Photography and the Representation of Violence

F. T. Marinetti's idea for a Futurist aesthetic was an ambitious one that wanted to include a diverse group of artistic media, ranging from the most traditional—painting, sculpture and literature—to those that had just begun to be considered vital components of an avant-garde movement, namely photography and cinema. The primary figure among the Futurists, other than Marinetti himself, who advocated the inclusion of these media within the Futurist programme was Anton Giulio Bragaglia. Formally known as *fotodinamismo*, Bragaglia's project was first mentioned in the pages of the Futurist publication "Lacerba" in 1913 not in the form of a manifesto, but as an advertisement: "Fotodinamismo Futurista. 16 Tavole fuori testo. Prezzo di Propoganda 10 soldi." In order to account for *fotodinamismo*'s marginal position in the movement, one could begin with a letter dated 4 September 1913 in which Umberto Boccioni writes to G. Sprovieri,

> **Mi raccomando, te lo scrivo a nome degli amici futuristi**, escludi qualsiasi contatto con la fotodinamica del Bragaglia—È una presuntuosa inutilità che danneggia le nostre aspirazioni di liberazione dalla riproduzione **schematica** o **successiva** della statica e del moto.[1]

In the same letter Bragaglia is described as a "fotografo positivista del dinamismo." It is evident from this description that Bragaglia's particular brand of photography, one that attempted to represent movement, was being stigmatized as a form of mimetic reproducton, something which Boccioni and the other Futurist painters who made movement a thematic focal point in their paintings wanted to transcend. Ironically, Bragaglia's standing among the Futurists suffered from that which the movement sought to overturn, namely the reactionary attitude that held sway over Italian art at the start of the century. In his encounter with the new technology of the day, Boccioni was both cautious and disdainful, choosing instead to conduct his assault on traditional attitudes and values in art within the confines of more traditional media. Nearly two decades after Boccioni's letter in an essay entitled *La fotografia futurista*, Marinetti states that the experiments

being done by the Futurists in photography have "lo scopo di far sempre più sconfinare la scienza fotografica nell'arte pura e favorirne automaticamente lo sviluppo nel campo della fisica, della chimica e della guerra."[2] Photography would be a tool operating in Futurism's ultimate aesthetic glorification, war.

Why did Marinetti delay in writing an essay in support of Bragaglia's project? A possible explanation would be the camera's lack of appeal as a literary motif. Marinetti's machines of choice were the automobile and the airplane perhaps because they corresponded to one of the conditions needed for the creation of art, the "orgiastic impulse" which Nietzsche described in *The Will to Power*.[3] According to Marinetti, artistic creation should verge on the irrational:

> Usciamo dalla saggezza come da un orribile guscio, e gettiamoci, come frutti pimentati d'orgoglio, entro la bocca immensa e tôrta del vento! . . . Diamoci in pasto all'Ignoto, non già per disperazione, ma soltanto per colmare i profondi pozzi dell'Assurdo![4]

Furthermore, they provided Marinetti with the popular imagery that would be necessary to propagate the cult of speed and virility which he would use to shift art's forum from the ivory tower of the Symbolist poet to mass culture. Schnapp has observed that for Marinetti the shortcomings of Symbolism are derived from its "inability to translate a radically modern poetics into a coherent public practice."[5] Marinetti could have facilitated the realization of his vision of mass art by utilizing a medium that makes extensive use of reproductions such as photography, one of the most avant-garde of the arts in which, as Walter Benjamin explains in *Illuminations*, the traditions of authorship and originality begin to be overturned.

Two years before Boccioni composed his letter to Sprovieri, Bragaglia expressed his aversion to any photographic activity that had the aim of creating realistic or painterly images in the preface to his book written in 1911 entitled *Fotodinamismo futurista*, where he and his brother Arturo state that they want to distance themselves from being labeled photographers: "ci piace inoltre di far osservare, che io e mio fratello Arturo, non siamo fotografi, e ci troviamo ben lontanti dalla professione di fotografi."[6] For Bragaglia and his brother the word "fotografo" is associated with the *passé* photographic convention of producing a mechanical copy of nature without reflecting critically on the creative moment involved in the image-making process. Bragaglia states in his book that his intention is aimed at purifying and liberating the photograph from its static realism. An example of the realism he wanted to avoid was the work done several decades earlier by the French photographer Marey who made studies of human and animalmovement. In an effort to further distance his work from that of his predecessors, Bragaglia makes reference to the tenth canto of Dante's *Commedia*.

Bragaglia is drawn to this particular canto because of the bas-reliefs that Dante-pilgrim describes as he begins his ascent. The bas-reliefs represent for Bragaglia, "un'arte divina che sapesse dare non uno ma molteplici tempi di un'azione, sempre nello stesso quadro, proprio col metodo del nostro movimentismo."[7] "Il nostro movimentismo" to which Bragaglia refers was the collective aspiration of the Futurists—writers, painters and photographers alike—to represent the simultaneity and synthesis of movement, the interpenetration of planes, and finally the disintegration of the object through a given medium, be it textual or plastic.

Bragaglia's *fotodinamismo* was the result of a precise equivalence between light, movement, color and film that, once obtained, would produce an image which represented the flux and rhythm of lines. The type of seeing that interested Bragaglia involved a "slow seeing by means of the fixation of movements spread over a period of time: prolonged time exposures."[8] The space of the photograph is filled by movement that has been fragmented so that we perceive not one moment of time, but many of them which have been multiplied creating a sense of dynamism; the result is thereby the illusion of perpetual movement. In this way, Bragaglia breaks the static sequences of movement found in earlier photographers like Marey. His primary preoccupation was to create a transcendental photograph of movement. For Bragaglia this meant

> la essenza interiore delle cose: il puro movimento, e preferiamo tutto in moto, perché, nel moto le cose dematerializzandosi, si idealizzano, pur possedendo ancora, profondamente, un forte scheletro di verità.[9]

Thus Bragaglia affirms the Futurist faith in movement, however he does so by making recourse to Platonic and Bergsonian philosophies. In the passage quoted, Bragaglia indicates his predilection for pursuing that which is transcendent in his subject. Movement, as Bragaglia understood it, is the means through which the transcendent reality of the phenomena around us could be revealed. By creating the illusion of movement in his photographs, Bragaglia hoped to avoid the stigma of the photographic image as imitation. His images display a dynamism that recalls Bergson's principle of *élan vital* which emphasizes the continual flux and mobility of matter. His notion of movement thus differs from the Futurist party-line whose main interest was in the contingent transient reality that Bragaglia had wanted to sublimate. Furthermore, Bragaglia writes of the idealization of the subject, which is the second phase of Auguste Comte's theory of art. In *A General View of Positivism*, Comte distinguishes three phases found in every work of art: imitation, idealization and expression.[10] He observes that the second phase is a feature that can be traced

back to the masterpieces of antiquity. The idealized beauty of the *Victory of Samothrace* which Marinetti rejected, is sought by Bragaglia via the machine.

Bragaglia's art, like that of his fellow Futurists, raises the question about the existence of an aesthetic creation: to what extent can a work of art seek to be alive and still be considered art? This ambition to create an art that seems to have overcome the dichotomy between being and appearance is made clear when Bragaglia makes reference to Dante's description of an art tht speaks:

> Colui che mai non vide cosa nova
> produsse esto visibile parlare,
> novello a noi perché qui non si trova.[11]

By using a technique that places emphasis on the reproduction of movement, not to mention the transformative powers of photography, Bragaglia, through relentless experimentation, pushes his response to its limits. According to Walter Benjamin, "No work of art may appear completely and unchecked alive without becoming mere appearance, thus ceasing to be a work of art."[12] The divine art of which Dante speaks has succeeded in creating a fusion of being and appearance that can still maintain the claim of being a work of art. Bragaglia's photographs come close to evoking the impression of looking at such art. One can imagine hearing the sound caused by the movement of hands typing, of a blow to the face, of a carpenter who is sawing. His work, however, is nothing more than illusion; it is an attempt to represent the Idea. Failure to obtain an art such as the one described by Dante through the photographic process is implicit. In order to find something that begins to approach the realization of "visibile parlare," we need to go outside of the plastic arts and into film.

Bragaglia's images were intended to reshape the public's perception of what constituted not only a photograph but also what could be considered art. The modernization of the viewer's sensibility was to be obtained through a direct appeal to his or her emotions rather than through spiritual or mystical means. Bragaglia's *Lo schiaffo* (1913) fulfills his desire to stimulate the senses of the viewer and to awaken the viewer's realization of possible alternative ways to conceive of reality. The alternative that Bragaglia offers to the public is one based on a reality permeated with optimism, faith in the ability of technology to revolutionize the way in which we perceive daily existence. The emphasis on content was no longer central to the Futurist movement. What mattered was the immediacy with which the message could be grasped.

Photography communicates its message through form, that is through lines and the use of space and light. The organization as well as the interaction of these elements creates the composition. Bragaglia's photographs demonstrate the multiplication of time and at the same time its immobilization. He opens up the

Figure 1: Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *Lo schiaffo* (1913).

Figure 2: Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *Dattilografa* (1911).

element of time in his photographs making it less rigid. His technique creates a sense of the passage of time due to the repetition and the fusion of lines while it simultaneously creates an uncanny sense of time as frozen, still, blocked. Bragaglia's photographs reveal the paradoxical nature of movement which contradicts a basic tenet of Futurism. The nearly aporetic revelation of the paradox of movement is not recent; it can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea and his four arguments against movement. The paradoxical nature of movement exemplified in Bragaglia's photographs explains why the Futurists resisted photography so ardently.

A textual source other than that with which Bragaglia has provided us which can establish the aesthetic climate in which his photographs functioned, is Marinetti's 1913 *Distruzione della sintassi—Immaginazione senza fili—Parole in libertà.* An initial reading of the section entitled "La sensibilità futurista" demonstrates one point in particular which Bragalia has realized through his *fotodinamismo*: "L'uomo moltiplicato dalla macchina. Nuovo senso meccanico, fusionedell'istinto col rendimento del motore e colle forze ammaestrate."[13] Instinct has the implied meaning of that which is spontaneous and uncontrollable such as violence for example. Here Marinetti, without making any reference to the photography of Bragaglia, concisely describes a photodynamic image as well as providing some insight on the sensibility of a Futurist photographer who embodies the marriage of art and science. Since photography and technology run parallel with one another the images are produced from the fusion of the photographer's artistic sensibility and the science which has given the photographer the means with which he can articulate his particular vision. Other affinities between Bragaglia's images and Marinetti's *Distruzione della sintassi—Immaginazione senza fili—Parole in libertà* are clear in such passages as follows: "noi potremo . . . **liquefare lo stile**"; "**I ventagli chiusi o aperti di movimenti**"; "**I movimenti a due, tre, quattro, cinque tempi**."[14] Incorporating such descriptions into an artwork had the specific aim of representing a modern reality whose experiences and objects reflected a plastic sensibility.

Bragaglia's effort to rethink photography's use of light and line was not confined to technique alone. What was the role which could be assigned to photography within the Futurist movement? Bragaglia gives an indication of this role when he writes, "Ed è indubbio che da tale moltiplicazione di entità noi veniamo ad ottenere una moltiplicazione di valori, atta ad arricchire ogni fatto di una più imponente personalità."[15] Here he introduces the idea of creating images that begin to change the values of the individual who views the photograph. Although Bragaglia does not theorize the use of photography as a means of political propaganda, his images are intended to convince the viewer that we are perpetual movement. The viewer is drawn into the Futurist sensibility

while the perception that the person has of his or her existence undergoes a reexamination. If the images were diffused in such a manner that the public was constantly exposed to them, it is possible to conclude that the images would alter the consciousness of the masses. A photograph for Bragaglia had value only insofar as the luminosity and energy of its lines could overflow its borders and engulf a responsive public which would take the spirit of the image out into the streets. It was hoped that the crowds would leave his exhibition having had their understanding of reality in some way altered: "Il quadro dunque potrà essere invaso e pervaso dalla essenza del soggetto, potrà essere ossessionato dal soggetto così da energicamente invadere ed ossessionare il pubblico con i propri valori."[16] From a Marxist point of view, Bragaglia's efforts could be perceived as an attempt to induce change on the level of the superstructure. Neither his photographs nor his texts with which I am familiar express his specific political affiliations; he was however a Futurist, which means that like Marinetti he too shared in the idea of art as revolution. There are not, however, any photographs taken by Bragaglia that belong to work done among the public on the streets. Two images of his which approach the working class are *Il falegname che sega* (1911) and *Dattilografa* (1911). Both of these images involve only on a superficial level the existence of the worker. The photographs are more concerned with the way in which movement is being handled. Some difficulty also lies in finding any evidence in Bragaglia's photographs which would suggest that he was attempting to promote change in the economic structures that were present in Italy, a country which was late in experiencing the forces of an industrial revolution when compared to other nations such as France or Britain.

Bragaglia's goal of idealizing the subject's form by dematerializing it through a combination of light and movement, his preoccupation with liberating the subject's interior essence reveal that his "rivoluzione" and "moltiplicazione dei valori" was actually addrssed to the individual aesthete rather than to the masses; Bragaglia's true audience was an élite of writers and artists, a fact that contradicts Futurism's more populist aspects and expectations. The notion of anarchism in Italy with its concerns for political and social reform at the time of *fotodinamismo* would suggest a need for a more documentary oriented style of photography which *fotodinamismo* is clearly lacking. The distance between Bragaglia's photographs and the political realities of the times is evident in the techniques that he used such as multiple exposures and a carefully formulated lighting arrangement. Bragaglia's photodynamic images were carried out in a studio resulting in a composition that is meant to be contemplated for the beauty of its rhythms.

Bragaglia draws his inspiration for *Lo schiaffo* from the third point of Marinetti's 1909 *Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo*: "Noi vogliamo esaltare

il movimento aggressivo, l'insonnia febbrile, il passo di corsa, il salto mortale, lo schiaffo ed il pugno."[17] In the photograph a man seated in a chair is looking up nonchalantly at another man who is about to strike him. The theme itself is interesting to the extent that it promotes violence as a form of art. Because the violence is being expressed via the language of aesthetics, however, the moral significance of the act is diminished. The photographic image, by nature removed from reality, can be a vehicle for "naturalizing" and promoting the acceptance of less acceptable forms of behavior, therefore undermining traditional codes of conduct. Commenting on the relationship between image and reality, Susan Sontag observes, "The notions of image and reality are complimentary. When the notion of reality changes, so does that of the image, and vice versa."[18] There is no attempt made by the individual who was knocked to the floor to defend against the blow from the other. He seems to sit passively in his chair waiting for the moment to come when the hand will make contact with his face. The description sounds absurd because the image suggests to us that there is some positive value in being struck to the ground, that participating in such an act equals aesthetic pleasure. Bragaglia's photodynamic image is inherently contradictory because the violence that it seeks to represent is sublimated through the flux of movement. Instead of maintaining a clear distiction between subject and object as would occur in a static image, dynamism causes them to become fused. Rather than undermine the continuity of the composition, the fragmenting and the subsequent synthesis of subject and object endows the photograph with a center the presence of which creates an image that is organic. The photograph's high degree of self-referentiality places it in the realm of aesthetics. It lacks a clear begining and ending due to the fragmentation and interpenetration which prohibit any definitive completion of the action. As a result the viewer's gaze is allowed to circulate freely within the space appropriated by the two men in the photograph. This temporal ambiguity is akin to that of a gerund insofar as it refers to an ongoing action in the present. Bragaglia's interest in going beyond mere appearences in the hope of revealing "l'essenza interiore delle cose" indicates his concern with the Idea which he tried to represent not by showing us the whole, but by showing us fragments. His pursuit of the Idea results in images that are equivocal and paradoxical, hence beautiful. The photodynamic image must be something "attiva che impone al pubblico la propria essenza liberissima, la quale per questo non sarà afferabile con la insipida facilità di tutte le cose troppo fedeli alla realtà solità."[19] Consequently, techniques essential to Futurist aesthetics such as dynamism, interpenetration and fragmentation disembody violence. In the founding manifesto of 1909, violence possesses a directness and an immediacy not found in *Lo schiaffo*; this is because violence looses its primacy in the photograph which subordinates it

to the beauty that comes from the transformative powers f movement. Moreover, in opposition to media of mass communication such as newspapers and manifestos whose content was intended for quick consumption and disposal, gallery exhibitions and art catalogs confered upon Futurist art the status of elitism and permanency.

When it was first introduced by Marinetti, Futurism was grounded on an aesthetics of movement that emphasized aggressivity and virility. Photography adhered thematically to representing violence but not without reinterpreting it radically. My sense is that Futurism was initially interested in movement from a perspective that was univocal and superficial. Movement and the violence produced were ends in themselves. With Bragaglia's photography an aspect of Futurism emerged that intended to go beyond appearence hoping to arrive at what Benjamin has refered to as being. Thus, violence lost its corporeality when it was used by Bragaglia in his attempt at making "una fotografia trascendentale del movimento."[20]

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Notes

[1]Umberto Boccioni, letter to G. Sprovieri, 4 September 1913, rpt in Gambillo 228.

[2]Marinetti, *La fotografia futurista*, *Teoria e invenzione futurista* 197.

[3]Nietzsche 491.

[4]Marinetti, *Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo, Teoria e invenzione futurista* 9.

[5]Schnapp 79.

[6]Bragaglia 9.

[7]Bragaglia 19.

[8]Moholy-Nagy 78.

[9]Bragaglia 29.

[10]Comte 382-83.

[11]Alighieri, *Purgatorio* X, 94-96.

[12]Quoted by Nägele 222.

[13]Marinetti, *Distruzione della sintassi—Immaginazione senza fili—Parole in libertà, Teoria e invenzione futurista* 68.

[14]Marinetti, *Distruzione della sintassi—Immaginazione senza fili—Parole in libertà, Teoria e invenzione futurista* 73.

[15]Bragaglia 29.

[16]Bragaglia 29.

[17]Marinetti, *Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo, Teoria e invenzione futurista* 10.

[18]Sontag 160.

[19]Bragaglia 29.

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Futurism's Construction of a Phallic National Identity

Italian Futurism is known best for proclamations such as:

> vogliamo liberare questo paese dalla sua fetida cancrena di professori, d'archeologhi, di ciceroni e d'antiquarii. . . . Date fuoco agli scaffali delle biblioteche! . . . Sviate il corso dei canali, per inondare i musei! . . . Oh la gioia di veder galleggiare alla deriva, lacere e stinte su quelle acque, le vecchie tele gloriose!. . . Impugnate i piccioni, le scuri, i martelli e demolite, demolite senza pietà le città venerate! (*Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo*, *Teoria e invenzione futurista* 7-13).[1]

However, the Italian Futurists' project was not one solely of destruction, for in *Guerra sola igiene del mondo*, Marinetti specifically rejects the characterization of Futurism as a movement that was oppositional merely for the sake of being antagonistic.

The Futurist project to "ricostruire," rather than to destroy, marks the starting point of this paper. In particular, I will be addressing the extent to which such a project of identity fabrication constructs itself in relation to a notion of *la patria*, and how such a construction of an ideal national self, which, as we will see, is ideally a Futurist self, must be staged on the exterior of the male body.[2] It is useful to keep in mind the psychoanalytic observation that identity is fictional rather than imitative. Since "identification is never simply mimetic but involves a strategy of wish-fulfillment" (Butler 334), identity shold be understood as a performative enactment of a fantasy.

For the Futurists, that fantasy entails either the repudiation of the feminine, its incorporation or appropriation, or its masculinization.[3] As such, the ideal, national self of the Futurists is explicitly gendered as masculine. However, it is the instability of national and gender identity in Futurist nationalist rhetoric that interests me. The very notion of *la patria* discloses a gender ambiguity in which the motherland, Italy, figures as a surrogate Phallic Mother who both mirrors the national subject's self-identity while, at the same time, representing otherness.

One of the central Futurist enterprises was the construction of a new

subjectivity appropriate to the Futurist vision for a new Italy. This "nuova Italia" would be the antithesis of "la città di Paralisi," which is characterized by cowardliness, sluggishness and moribundity in Marinetti's manifesto *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna* (*TIF* 14-26). The "qualities" that the Futurists purpose for ideal Italians are, not surprisingly, the characteristics of the Futurists themselves. In their attempt to create a new "group-mind," that is, a new self-image for the Italian people, the Futurists are indeed attempting to reinvent the Italian identity, excluding all the vices associated with a weak and decadent unified Italy such as "passatismo" and "parlamentarismo," and substituting in their stead Futurist virtues.[4]

To the extent that the objective of the Italian Futurists is to distance themselves from the qualities, history and surroundings that typified the Italy that the Futurists despise, the Futurists' nationalism differs from other nineteenth-century and twentieth-century European nationalist impulses, including their own Italian predecessor.[5] The unification of Italy in 1861 was the result of a "second wave" of nationalist movements which, according to Benedict Anderson, emphasized the genealogical justification and identity of the nation (195). As such, these "second wave" movements stressed continuity and historical tradition as opposed to the newness that had characterized the "first wave" of nationalist movements which had originated in the "New World" (Anderson 187-206) Interestingly, Futurism's nationalist rhetoric, which emphasizes a radical break from the past, resembles more this "first wave" of nationalist movements.

Futurism's refusal of the past is exemplified by Marinetti's address to Italian students in *Guerra sola igiene del mondo*:

> Oggi più che mai la parola *Italia* deve dominare sulla parola *Libertà*. Tutte le libertà, eccettuata quella di essere vigliacchi, pacifisti, neutralisti. Tutti progressi nel cerchio della nazione. Cancelliamo la gloria romana con una gloria italiana più grande. Combattiamo dunque la cultura germanica, non già per difendere la cultura latina, ma combattiamo tutte e due queste culture ugualmente nocive, per difendere il genio creatore italiano d'oggi. (*TIF* 336)

Despite this forward-looking focus, and even as Marinetti promotes an anti-traditional, iconoclastic vision for the nation, he simultaneously reinvokes tradition by championing a conventionally-gendered ideal Italian male whose masculinity must be fervently militant.[6] However, even within this militant masculinity, an instability lurks which questions the very definition of masculinity.

For the Futurists, the model fo this ideal Italian male is, of course, the ideal Futurist. Marinetti's definition of Futurism in *Lettera aperta al futurista Mac Delmarle* elucidates the gender prejudice upon which Futurism is constructed: "Noi professiamo un nazionalismo antitradizionale che ha per base il vigore

inesauribile del sangue italiano" (*TIF* 92).[7] Here, Marinetti equates Futurism and its particular brand of nationalism with the vigor of Italian blood. Vigor, while not a quality exclusive to men, connotes a traditionally masculine quality. As such, Futurism and its brand of renegade nationalism hinge on the supposed inherent masculinity that runs through the Italian male's veins.

With his pithy proclamation about "il vigore inesauribile del sangue italiano," Marinetti's forward-looking nationalism reveals its roots in a conservatively gendered political rhetoric. In addition, Marinetti's configuration of the ideal Italian becomes inseparable from that of the ideal Futurist. Even if other Italian nationalist groups also espouse the idea of an Italian essence, namely, an *italianità*, the Futurists' conception of "Italianness" is inseparable from a notion of virile masculinity. However, as we will see, the Futurists strong emphasis on masculinity intimates the weaknesses that lurk in that masculinity and in that sanguine vim.

The Futurist painter Umberto Boccioni identifies one such weakness when he laments,

> Disgraziatamente l'italiano, che sa giuocare la vita per una femmina, è incapace di imporsi una disciplina, un amore ideale lontano, di concepire astrattamente il dovere, la patria, e la solidarità.[8]

Boccioni's observation alludes to the incongruous behavior of the very Italians upon whose vigorous blood Futurism relies. It also discloses Futurism's misogyny for, as Boccioni points out, while the average Italian is capable of making the ultimate sacrifice for "una femmina," he is incapable of making sacrifices for more abstract, and, it is implied, more deserving causes. As such, Boccioni seems to have some reservations about "il vigore inesauribile del sangue italiano."

Ironically, Boccioni might be addressing this criticism to Marinetti himself. For although Marinetti exhibits the qualities of the virile and militant Futurist in his "love manual" *Come si seducono le donne* (1918), he unwittingly reveals himself to be also the Italian who, if he does not go so far as to "giuocare la vita per una femmina," will at least wait twelve hours hidden under a bed in order to get her alone. In doing so, Marinetti propels Futurism and "il vigore inesauribile del sangue italiano" into farce, which depends on just such ludicrous and improbable situations (Abrams 29). However, while it may appear farcical, *Come si seducono le donne* is a strategic military and Futurist tactic.

Although Marinetti at times resembles more a pathetic Don Juan than a virile Futurist, he also invokes but reverses the Ovidian maxim "Miliat omnis amans, et habet sua castra Cupido" (*Amores* 1.9, v. 1). For Marinetti, the maxim

should read not "every lover is a soldier" but rather, "every soldier is a lover." The analogy between soldier and lover is not just coincidental, but is necessary, for, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick observes, the military is the space in which the most intimate male bonding is prescriptive and homosexuality is proscriptive (Sedgwick, 1986).[9] As such, it is with regards to "Cupid's camp" that it is mst imperative to theatricalize one's heterosexuality since the need to appear strong militarily entails the risk of appearing weak by exposing the homoerotic bonds between men.[10] Therefore, for Marinetti, while every lover may be a soldier, every soldier must be a heterosexual lover.

Paradoxically, it is through the theatricalization of Marinetti's amorous conquests in "Cupid's own field" that *Come si seducono le donne* discloses the threat of effeminization or homosexuality; it reveals this threat in its very attempt to combat it. To ward off such "evils" as effeminization or homosexuality, virile ornamentation such as spurs are employed. However, virile ornamentation as well has an undesired effect. When virility depends on fashion to affirm its presence, those fashion accessories exposes virility as an exterior mask which the Futurist performs or wears as a costume.

Writing on the eighteenth century "renunciation of fashion by men" Kaja Silverman points out that at that time women began to be the prime articulators of their families' wealth. While women began to dress to impress, men began to culturally "renown fashion." Nevertheless, male subjectivity, similar to female subjectivity, finds its primary libidinal pleasure in exhibitionism; only secondarily does is find pleasure in voyeurism (Silverman 142). The male subject, as feminists have argued, gravitates toward scopophilia as a means of disavowing its own castration anxiety. However, when the male subject becomes the object of its own scopophilic gaze through a concern for fashion, that fashionable project avows and therefore discloses the anxiety about castration, which is an anxiety about the male subject's virility.

Fashion, therefore, is important for the staging of both Futurism's cultural distinction of nationality and masculinity. Giacomo Balla in his *Manifesto futurista del vestito da uomo* offers an example in which the male body becomes the space for the staging of both.[11] Balla's manifesto on men's clothing seemingly responds to the question Futurists have posed for themselves, namely, "What's a Futurist to wear?" If such a concern for fashion reveals the weaknesses in the virile Futurist subjectivity, the threat of this effeminizing possibility is allayed by the ancillary position it holds within greater Futurist concerns. The manifesto begins, "Noi futuristi, nei brevi intervalli del grande lavoro di rinnovamento, discutevamo di ogni cosa, come è nostra abitudine" (Balla 144). Yet, according to the manifesto that follows, men's clothing is clearly part of, if not essential to, the Futurists' struggles for renewal. As Balla writes,

> For quite some time now we have been convinced that today's clothes . . . are still atrociously passéist. . . . Our crowded streets, our theatres and cafes are all imbued with a depressing funereal tonality, because clothes are made only to reflect the gloomy and dismal moods of today's passeists. (Balla 132)

For Balla, while clothes "reflect" an interior state and therefore project or imitate a pre-existing interiority, appropriate Futurist attire can alter that interior state.

As a result, Balla seems to suggest that by merely restyling that exterior through fashion, the interior, namely, the very subjectivity of the Italian male, can be radically transformed as well. For the Futurists, it would seem that, as the saying goes, the suit indeed "makes the man," that is, the interior identity is brough into being by exterior ornamentation.[12] Balla's manifesto discloses how subjectivity is displayed onto the body, which in turn suggests that the surface is **not** an effect of an essential nature or of a cause originating from within the body. I would like to suggest that Balla's reference to the "brief intervals" from which emerge the Futurists' concern for fashion, might figure as the fissures or gaps in the Futurists' ideal male subjectivity.

While the Futurists value inconsistencies, in as much as the latter reflect Futurism's embracement of change and dynamism in general, inconsistencies that undermine Futurism's construction of an ideal Italian masculinity present a problem for the Futurist agenda. Such problems surface in Marinetti's *Come si seducono le donne*. As Marinetti and his lover discuss the spurs that he wore during their lovemaking, here again what the Futurist wears is paramount to his Futurist virility. Curiously, while the spurs attribute bellicose qualities to Marinetti, who, thanks to them, is "pieno di guerra" during love-making, Marinetti also declares that a woman without a man with spurs is an empty revolver (Marinetti 1918, 56-61). The spurs, therefore, assume phallic potential in the lovemaking, both for the man and the women. Marinetti elaborates, stating that "Una bella donna non può avere altro amante che un soldato armato in tutti i modi che viene dal fronte e sta per ripartire" (Marinetti 1981, 59). It is implied that anything less virile than a soldier with all his bellicose accoutrements will not only invoke Italy's effeminate and antiquated legacy, but will prove a poor lover. Once again, the clothes articulate not only the body but the spirit of the man inside them.

From Balla's manifesto, it is clear that the man whose wardrobe the Futurists want to revamp is the passeist's. His wardrobe is described as:

> (a) **the timidity and symmetry** of colours, colours which are arranged in wishy-washy patterns of idiotic spots and stripes;
> (b) all forms of **lifeless** attire which make man feel tired, depressed, miserable

> and sad, and which restrict movement producing a triste wanness;
> (c) so-called "good taste" and harmony, which weaken the soul and take the spring out of the step (Balla 133).

In delineating just how the Futurist male body is to be clothed, (and how it is not to be), emphasis is placed on clothing that is "allegrissssssssssimo" (Balla 145) and "daring clothes with brilliant colours and dynamic lines" (Balla 132). Further requisitions demanded of the Futurist clothing:

> We want Futurist clothes to be comfortable and practical/ Dynamic/ Aggressive/ Shocking/ Energetic/ Violent/ Flying (i.e. giving the idea of flying, rising and running)/ Peppy/ Joyful/ Illuminating (in order to have light in the rain)/ Phosphorescent/ Lit by electric lamps (Balla 132).

If these qualities are not enough to convey the masculine (not efeminate!) nature of this concern for dress, Futurist clothes should also "encourage industrial activity . . . [and] Use materials with forceful MUSCULAR colours" (Balla 132).

It is not insignificant that in Balla's manuscript, these characteristics are written so as to form the outline or silhouette of Balla's design for a Futurist suit. The disposition of the words in relation to the design of the suit further underscores how the Futurist identity is enunciated on the body's surface, moving from the outside inward.

In addition, while Futurist clothes ought to denote productivity and muscular forcefulness, the fact that they ought also "provide constant and novel enjoyment for our [male] bodies" (Balla 132) seems to align Balla's manifesto with a Foucaultian aesthetic of non-genital pleasure. Non-genital pleasures are in sharp contrast to Marinetti's genital objective in *Come si seducono le donne*. Moreover, non-genital pleasure suggests the possibility of non-heterosexual pleasure as well.[13]

Also conflicting with what one might expect from the virile Futurist, Balla's Futurist dress-code allows for variation: "**Pattern changes** should be available by pneumatic dispatch, in this way anyone may change his clothes according to the needs of mood" (133). So even though the Futurist's clothes, like the Futurist himself should be dynamic, aggressive, etc., the possibility of mutation should not be shunned. "Available modifications will include: Loving/ Arrogant/ Persuasive/ Diplomatic/ Unitonal/ Multitonal/ Shaded/ Polychrome/ Perfumed" (133). While it may be possible to characterize these alternate qualities as "masculine," and while the possibility for pattern changes are justified by the Futurist propensity for spontaneity, read against other Futurist proclamations, which disdain vacillation, it would seem that the Futurist has a license for mood swings that is repugnant in the non-Futurist. In *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna*,

Marinetti writes,

> Che mai pretendono le donne, i sedentari, gl'invalidi, gli ammalati, e tutti i consiglieri prudenti? Alla loro vita vacillante, rotta da lugubri agonie, da sonni tremebondi e da incubi grevi, noi preferiamo la morte violenta e glorifichiamo come la sola che sia degna dell'uomo, animale da preda. (*TIF* 15)

If variety is called for in order to avoid stasis, it also allows for the sort of vacillation and catering to "the needs of mood," that the Futurist despises in others but apparently sanctions in himself.

As a result, the Futurist manifesto on men's clothing unwittingly evidences the fragile construction of masculinity, which, as Barbara Spackman has demonstrated, threatens to not be virile at all. Yet, in addition to Spackman's insight regarding the fear that "given half a chance, boys will be girls" (91), and likewise, the analogous argument that, without the proper clothes, a Futurist might be indistinguishable from a non-Futurist, it would seem that even with his clothes, it is difficult to tell the Futurist from the non-Futurist.

The same argument that has been made about sexual identity applies to the Futurists and their figuration of an ideal Italian. As Judith Butler purports regarding sexual identity, the markings of gender are naively misinterpreted as the marks of an anatomically essential category called "sex." Similarly, the identities of both the Futurist and the Italian, at a closer look, reveal themselves to have no essence; indeed, the Futurst and the Italian are constructed from the outside inward.

I wish now to look at the erotic investment suggested by the Futurist configuration of a nationalist self-identity as well as the Futurist construction of *la patria*. To examine the Futurists' erotic investment in nationalism, it is revealing to look at Marinetti's definitions regarding *la patria*. In these passages, we will find a gender ambiguity that foregrounds the male body, often convoluting it with *la patria*.

In *Al di là del Comunismo*,[14] Marinetti writes,

> Il cuore dell'uomo rompe nella sua espansione circolare il piccolo cerchio soffocatore della famgilia, per giungere fino agli orli estremi della Patria, dove sente palpitare i suoi connazionali di frontiera, come i nervi periferici del proprio corpo. (*TIF* 474)

Here, rather than emphasizing *la patria* as a feminine body as it has been traditionally figured, Marinetti suggests an image in which *la patria* functions as a physical space that allows for the corporeal union between "pulsating" male bodies. It is not insignificant that the man's heart breaks free of the institution

of the heterosexual family to be able to feel, via a nationalistic discourse, male bodies not unlike his own. The fact that these bodies bear a striking resemblance to his own, indeed are like his own body ("come i nervi periferici del proprio corpo"), underscores the narcissistic quality of these homoerotic, nationalist aspirations in which the desired other is indistinguishable from the self.

Lynn Hunt suggests in *Eroticism and the Body Politic* that the body politic is often figured as a female body that is necessary to connect men: "the point of triangulation or exchange that enables men to relate to one another in social and political organizations" (13). As such, female corporeality then serves both to facilitate and to displace, if not to disavow, the desire between men. Yet, as is evident in Marinetti's definition, the male body is not disavowed but is, on the contrary, quite present. The female body of *la patria* becomes conflated with the male body of the patriotic subject as "i nervi periferici" of the male body suggestively parallel the "estremi orli della Patria." Already a hybrid, *la patria*, etymologically "la terra dei padri" incorporates "il padre" into "la terra," or vice versa, semantically performing both a feminization of the masculine and a masculinization of the feminine. In his discussion of this androgynous entity, Marinetti however reasserts the masculine body. Again the male body then becomes the space through and on which the cultural distinction of nationality is staged.

La patria also functions as a fetish upon whose existence the national subject's possession of the Phallus depends. For as Marinetti declares, "Negare la patria equivale a isolarsi, castrasi, diminuirsi, denigrarsi, suicidarsi" (*TIF* 475).[15] To deny the homeland is an act equal to self-castration. Marinetti also offers this interpretation:

> La patria rappresenta per noi il massimo allargamento della generosità dell'individuo straripante in cerchio su tutti gli esseri umani similia lui. (*AdldC* 474)

Here, the feminine body of the patria is figured first as an extension of the masculine self, and then as one with that self. As such, the body of the national subject and the female body of *la patria* are superimposed. The nationalist, therefore, must defend his own bodily borders as well as her terrestrial confines. Furthermore, keeping in mind Marinetti's quintessential Futurist, Mafarka, and his physical attributes (an eleven meter penis), the "massimo prolungamento dell'individuo" is clearly both *la patria* and the penis (*TIF* 253-266).

In *Come si seducono le donne*, we have seen how the Futurists conflate the penis with the Phallus. As Lacan argues such a confusion is almost obligatory albeit fallacious:

> The price of the subject's access to the world of desire is that the real organ must be marked at the imaginary level with this bar, so that its symbol can take up its place as the signifier of this very point where the signifier is lacking. (Lacan in Mitchell 117)

That the Futurists confuse the penis with the Phallus is significant, for as we will see below, the nationalist's castration, the nation's castration and the subject's "personal" castration are all related.

What is most obvious about the language used in the context of Futurism's nationalism is that the relationship between one's country and oneself is figured as familiar, and at times, incestuous. In the case of Italy, *la patria* is an androgynous maternal figure and the nationalist subject is the son/suitor. The Futurists also recognize that this maternal figure is castrated. As a body, she is missing vital parts: "una Italia mutila, ancora una volta rassegnata nella sua mutilazione. Non c'è Venezia, non c'è Istria, non c'è Fiume."[16]

That Italy had been mutilated, castrated, was in fact the complaint of Italian irredentism. By desiring to return to Italy her irredenta and thereby restore her status as a non-mutilated maternal body, that is, as the Phallic Mother, the Futurists along with other irredentists demonstrate how the castration of the national subject and that of *la patria* are intertwined. In a letter to Papini, Marinetti makes the explicit connection between an "Italia futurista," and his own castration: "È più facile strapparmi i testicoli che la fede in una Italia futurista, grande, geniale, prima nel mondo, inesauribilmente ricca di genii."[17] *La patria* allows the individual to offset his castration, provided he restores the missing parts to the maternal body. Ideally, Italy would then be restored to her status as Phallic Mother and an *Italia futurista* is an Italy with "with balls" (or with a penis).

Since in Marinetti's definition of *la patria*, the male body and *la patria* are closely related, the nationalist must identify with Italy and her castration. Such identification is necessary for the deployment of nationalist and patriotic rhetoric. It is for this reason that Benedict Anderson's theorizing of the importance of imagination in nationalism is significant, for without identification, without the notion of commonality, of *italianità*, nationlist discourse, like the Phallus, deflates.

Yet, paradoxically, the national subject must also refuse or disavow such a disturbing identification with *la patria*'s castration, for as the mutilated feminine body, Italy is the sign of sexual difference which evokes his own castration anxiety. The irredentist feels anxiety not just because he fears castration, but because he, in as much as he identifies with the mutilated motherland, has been castrated as well. War against Austria can then figured as the ultimate Oedipal conflict, in which the patriot combats to restore the Phallus to the maternal body,

as well as secure his own access to it.

With war, however, comes sacrifice. Anxiety about the disfigurement of the male body emerges in *Come si seducono le donne* where Marinetti seems fearful that Italian women will no longer desire the Italian male body mutilated by war. This preoccupation compels the narrating voice to redirect its address from its putatively male readership to a female one. These female readers are instructed, one might dare say, beseeched, to be attracted to this mutilated but, presumably no longer castrated, male body:

> Donne, dovete preferire ai maschi intatti più o meno sospetti di vigliaccheria, i gloriosi mutilati! Amateli ardentmente! I loro baci Futuristi vi daranno dei figli d'acciaio" (Marinetti 1918, 146).

Echoing Balla's manifesto on clothing, the identity of the Futurist soldier is articulated from the outside in, and physical mutilation is the sign of inner virility. Ideally, war would function as a sort of plastic surgery that, by altering the surface, would give proof of the Futurist that is supposedly beneath the skin:

> Donne fate che ogni italiano dica partendo: Voglio offirle al mio ritorno una bella ferita degna di lei! . . . Voglio che la battaglia mi riplasmi il corpo per lei! . . . Voglio essere modificato dalle granate e dalle baionette nemiche per lei! (Marinetti 1981, 147)

Again the Futurist soldier's identity is inscribed onto his body which, as a sort of text, impersonates and incorporates (literally, takes into the body) that identity.

This preoccupation with possible loss or mutilation is attributable to the fact that, similar to the Lacanian subject who knows that "'having' only functions at the price of loss and 'being' as an effect of division" (Rose in Mitchell 40), the national subject can only secure the Phallus at the price or risk of bodily mutilation, that is, by another sort of castration. Whether at the level of personal subjectivity or national subjectivity, identity is secured through a loss, or mutilation in the case of the Futurist soldier. This fact reiterates the psychoanalytic insight that "normal" male subjectivity is constructed on castration anxiety. The nationalist must risk mutilation in order to maintain the split from the Other, for without such a division, the identity of the self, and the nation, is non-existent. Carl Carrà insightfully notes just this when he writes, "Rinnegare il nazionalismo vuol dire assoggettarsi al nazionalismo d'altri."[18]

The nationalist's sacrifice for the homeland can be said to function as a repetition of the loss upon which all identity is founded. At the same time, sacrifice is a means of disavowing that loss. As such, the homeland defended,

restored to its un-mutilated state, can then assume the role of a fetish which, as the site of both the denial of sexual difference (the denial of castration) and the continuous reminder of sexual difference, depends on a double and conflicting reading. The ambiguous or hybrid gendering of *la patria* then complements the homeland's role as fetish.

As Benedict Anderson has argued, nationalism identities an "imagined community." Although the Futurists imagine a virile, militant masculinity for themselves and for the nation, they also undermine that masculinity by emphasizing its performative and ornamental nature. Furthermore, the achievement of the national community that the Futurists desire necessitates not only the staging of nationalism on the nationalist's own phallic body but demands that *la patria* figure as a phallic maternal body.

Carolyn Daly
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Notes

[1]From here on abbreviated as *TIF.*

[2]I am indebted to Professor Lucia Re of UCLA for calling to my attention the privileging and objectification of the male body in Marinetti's texts during a graduate seminar on Futurism.

[3]Blum and Re delivered papers dealing with Futurism's attitudes toward women at a conference on Futurism held at UCLA, March 10-12, 1993. Also see Cinzia Blum, "Rhetorical Strategies and Gender in Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto," *Italica* 67 (1990): 196-211; and Lucia Re, "Futurism and Feminism," *Annali d'Italianistica* 7 (1989): 253-272.

[4]In addition to the evidence in the Futurist manifestos themselves, for Italy's national inferiority complex, see R. J. B. Bosworth, *Italy, the Least of Great Powers: Italian Foreign Policy Before the First World War* (London: Cambridge UP, 1970). Also Richard Drake, *Byzantium for Rome: The Politics of Nostalgia in Umbertian Italy, 1878-1900* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1980).

[5]For example, the nationalism of Enrico Corradini, the early twentieth century political and literary figure and his political party, *Associazione nazionalità italiana*, invoke the mythology of the Roman empire and Italy's past glory to be reclaimed. See Drake, 187. Also Emilio Gentile, "Il futurismo e la politica dal nazionalismo modernista al fascismo 1909-1920," *Futurismo, Cultura e Politica*, ed. Renzo De Felice (Turin: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1988) 105-159. Regarding Futurism's distinctly forward-looking nationalism, Gentile writes, "Questo nazionalismo non aveva gli occhi rivolti al passato per rifiutare il presente, ma guardava al futuro; aveva una propria imagine-mito della 'vita moderna' e considerava l'industializzazione un processo inevitabile per

consolidare la nazione e accrescere la sua potenza" (107).

[6]It must be recognized that the ideal masculinity that the Futurists celebrate marks a departure fromthe profile of the languid, depressed, neutral Italian male who the Futurists disdain. However, Futurist anti-tradtionalism is at times accompagned by a less than iconoclastic sexual politics. See Re (1989) and Blum (1988). Also Ciniza Blum, "The Scarred Womb of the Futurist Woman," *Carte Italiane* 8 (1986-87): 14-30.

[7]Also referred in Gentile, 111.

[8]Umberto Boccioni, *Opere complete* (Foligno: F. Campitelli, 1927) 8-9; quoted in Gentile, 113.

[9]Sedgwick is mentioned in Barbara Spackman, "The Fascist Rhetoric of Virility," *Stanford Italian Review* 8 (1990): 95-96. See Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) 83-96.

[10]Alice Yaeger Kaplan also suggests that military comradery poses a threat to a stable definition of masculinity by permitting activities usually off-limits to masculinity to typify masculine behavior in the particular content of the military. Kaplan, *Reproduction of Banality* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986) 11.

[11]Due to the difficulty in reading Balla's manuscript as reprinted in Mario Bulzoni, ed., *Ricostruzione futurista dell'universo* (Rome: 1968), I also refer the English translation of Balla's manifesto: *Futurist Manifest of Men's Clothing* in *The Documents of 20th Century Art*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, trans. Robert Brain et al. (New York: Viking P, 1970) 132-134.

[12]Silverman contends, "Clothing is a necessary condition of subjectivity—that in articulating the body, it simultaneously articulates the psyche" in "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse," *Studies in Entertainment*, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986) 147. Silverman also refers to Freud's similar conviction, see Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1953-1966) v. IX, 26.

[13]Winifred Woodhull, "Sexuality, Power and the Question of Rape," *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, eds. Irene Diamond et al. (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1988). "According to Foucault, the preferred strategy is to 'desexualize' sexuality by multiplying and diffusing pleasures, in order cancel the now-obsolete understanding of it as a circumscribed domain fundamentally opposed to power and the law" (169). Woodhull refers to "The Confession of the Flesh," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980) 194-228.

[14]Here on abbreviated as *AdldC*.

[15]Other references by Marinetti to castration in relation to *la patria* include the following from *Guerra sola igiene del mondo*: "Oggi, in Italia, passatisti è sinonimo di neutralisti, pacifisti ed eunuchi, mentre futuristi è sinonimo di anti-neutralisti violenti" (*TIF* 332).

[16]Paolo Orano, *La Dalmazia è italiana. Sarà italiana*! published August 12, 1917; quoted in Gentile, 127-128.

[17]Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, letter to Papini, October 1913, Carte Papini, (Florence: Fondazione Primo Conti); quoted in Gentile, 116.

[18]Carlo Carrà, letter to Soffici, 12 June 1913, *Archivi del futurismo*, ed. M. Drudi Gambillo and T. Fiori (Rome: De Luca, 1959-1962) vol. I, 217; quoted in Gentile, 110, n. 15.

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